



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

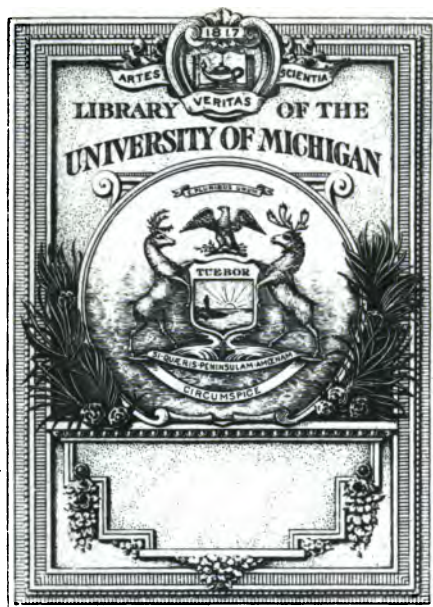
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A 685103

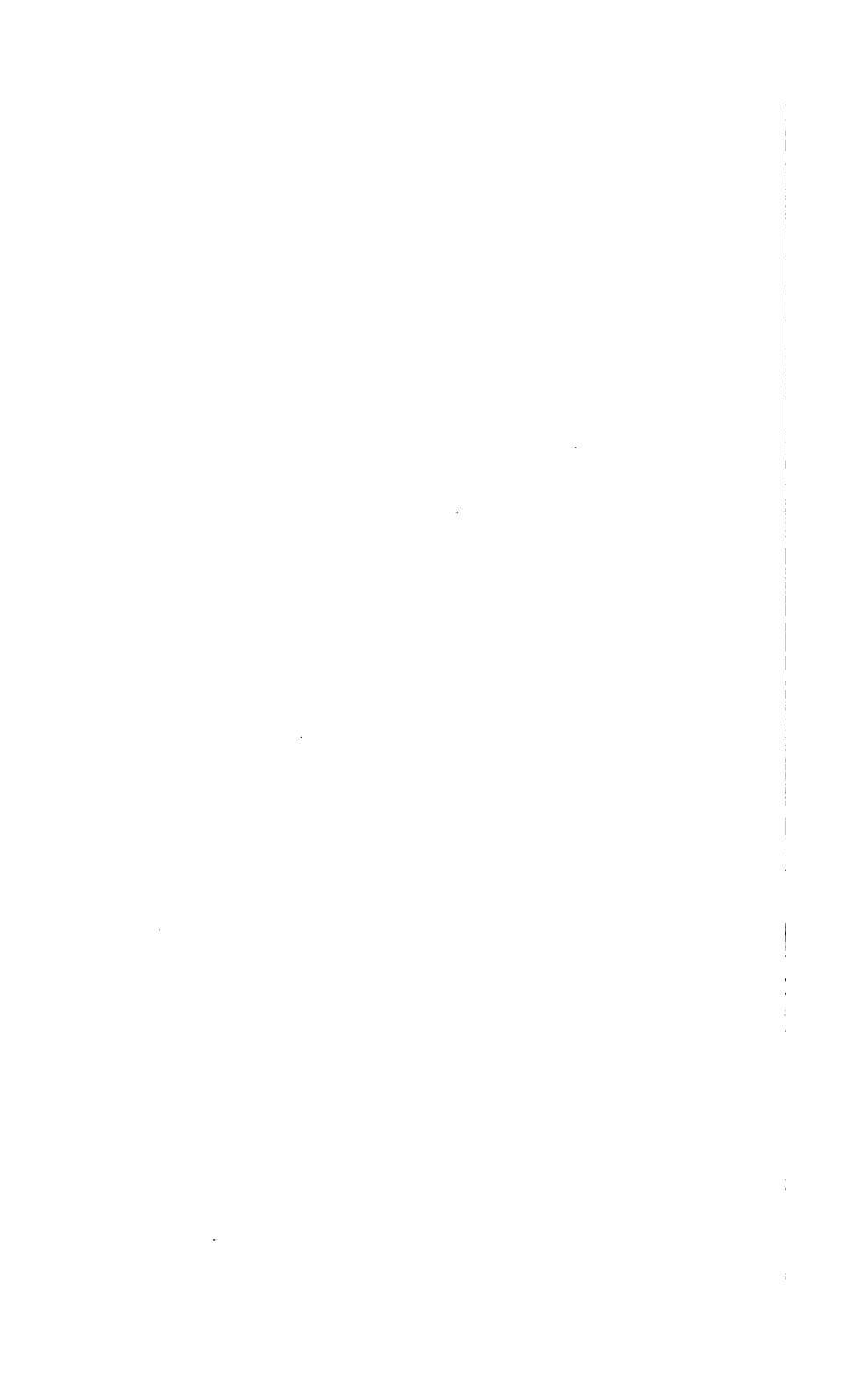


IIA

625

.078

1237







# ENGLAND.

WITH SKETCHES OF SOCIETY IN

## THE METROPOLIS.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE PILOT," "THE SPY," "EXCURSIONS IN SWITZERLAND," &c.

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

---

1837.





# CONTENTS

## OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

---

### LETTER XI.

Sir Walter Scott.—Sir James Mackintosh.—Seemliness of England.—Close Corporations.—Copyright.—English Literature.—Works of Sir Walter Scott.—Mr. Sotheby.—Mr. Coleridge.—Commodore Rodgers.—Conversations of Mr. Coleridge.—English Ladies.—Free Trade. Page 1

### LETTER XII.

The House of Lords.—Chamber of Deputies Marquis of Salisbury.—Affected Pronunciation.—Parliament of England.—The King and the Parliament.—Peers and Commoners.—Public opinion.—The Mercantile Class.—The Public Press.—The Church.—English Aristocracy.—Nobility and Gentry.—Mr. Brougham. . . . 43

## LETTER XIII.

The People of England.—Reform.—Condition of England.—Taxes and Commerce.—Condition of the Aristocracy.—New Peerage.—Institutions of England.—A Money-Government.—Wealth of Lord Grosvenor; and of the Nobility and Gentry.—Power of the Aristocracy.—Morals of the Upper Classes.—The Professions.—Manliness of the Gentry.—Prejudices of the Aristocracy.—National Prejudices.—Respect paid to Rank.—Princely Nobility. . . . . 79

## LETTER XIV.

Sir Thomas Lawrence.—Mr. Leslie.—Mr. Newton.—Dinner at Mr. Rogers's.—The Princess of Wales and Sir Walter Scott.—Mr. "Conversation" Sharp.—English Society.—Mrs. Siddons.—Mrs. Lockhart.—Sir Walter and Lady Scott.—Mr. Rogers . . . . . 118

## LETTER XV.

Vicinity of London.—English Landscapes.—Parks.—Richmond Hill.—Twickenham.—Strawberry Hill.—Windsor Castle.—St. George's Chapel. . . . . 139

## LETTER XVI.

Dancing.—Englishwomen.—Balls.—Exclusive Society.—American Toad-eaters.—A subtle distinction of Character.—Sir James Scarlett.—Ludicrous Mistake.—Visit to a Merchant.—Honourables and Right Honourables.—English Dancing.—A Young American Girl.—Visit to a Patrician.—English Girls.—Unfeminine Manners.—English Ladies and Gentlemen. . . . . 162

## CONTENTS.

v

### LETTER XVII.

The Thames — Its Bridges. — The Boar's Head. — First Visit to London. — My two Cicerones. — An American Sailor at the West-end. — Notions of Liberty. — Rundell and Bridge. — Jewellery. — English Plate. — A Royal Salver. — Anecdote of George IV. . . . . 199

### LETTER XVIII.

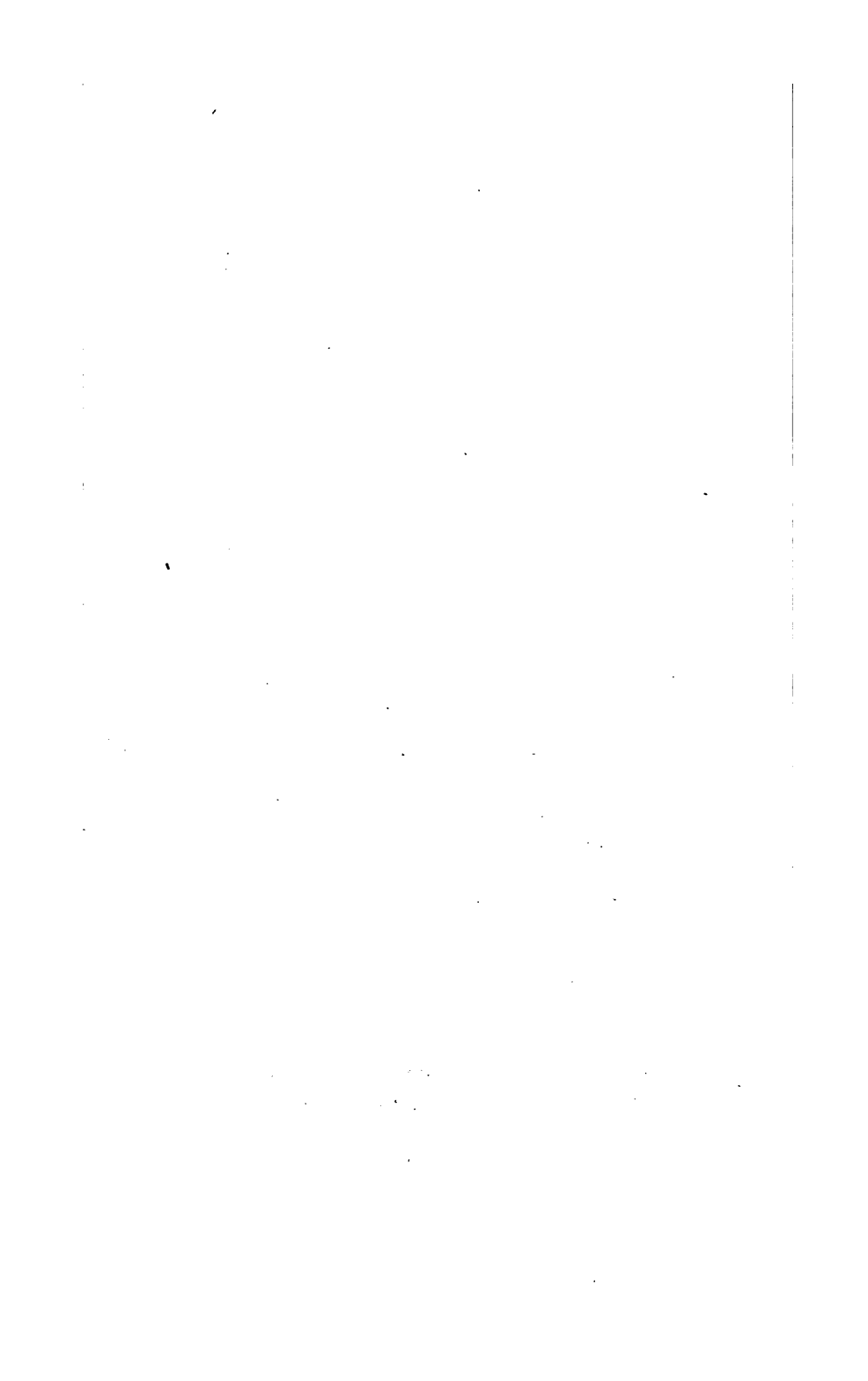
Venders of Lies. — Periodical Press. — Influence of Money. — The English Press. — Influence of the Aristocracy. — Personal Abuse. — Abuse of America. — English Reviews. — American Enterprise. — Influence of Mediocrity. — Literary Quackery. — Literary Fraud. — Electioneering Lies. — Abuses of the Press. — The Press in England and America. . . . . 227

### LETTER XIX.

My Reception in England. — Rudeness of the English. — A female Dandy. — A Discovery. — Eggs. — Democracy and Drunkenness. — Conversation with Mr. Brougham. — Fashionable Novels. — Children of Rank. — Homage to Rank. . . . . 269

### LETTER XX.

Tower of London — Old Implements of War in the Armoury. — English Rudeness and French Politeness. — Order of Precedence. — American Pronunciation. — National Peculiarity. — Right of Impressment. — Effect of a Hint. — Anecdote. . . . . 290



# ENGLAND.

---

## LETTER XI.

TO JAMES E. DE KAY, ESQ.

Sir Walter Scott.—Sir James Mackintosh.—Seemliness of England.—Close Corporations.—Copyright.—English Literature.—Works of Sir Walter Scott.—Mr. Sotheby.—Mr. Coleridge.—Commodore Rodgers.—Conversations of Mr. Coleridge.—English Ladies.—Free Trade.

I WAS passing through Pall Mall, shortly after the town became so crowded, when I saw a mermaid combing her hair before a small mirror, as the crest on a chariot that stood at a door, and I at once thought I recognised the arms of Sir Walter Scott. On examining nearer, I found the bloody hand, which left no doubt that the literary baronet was in town.

Among the persons whom a mistaken opinion that I was the son of —— had brought to my door, was Sir G—— P——, a member of parliament, and a strong whig. This gentleman had the good-nature not to drop me when he found his error, but he proffered many civilities, which were commenced by an invitation to dinner.

I do not remember to have seen a house with exactly the same *entourage* as that of Sir G—— P——'s. I had the street and number of course, but when I got near the place, I found nothing but shops, or dwellings of an appearance that did not indicate the residence of an affluent baronet. At the precise number, however, I found such a door as one might have expected to meet ; and nothing but a door. It had pilasters, fan-lights, a neat entrance, and a massive knocker, with two powdered and liveried footmen in waiting. Of course

I gave the magical raps, the "open sesame" of London, and was forthwith admitted. "Pray, sir, does Sir G—— P—— live here?" The answer was satisfactory, though *how* he lived was to me still a matter of wonder. An inner door was opened, and a long and wide passage lay before me. At the end of this, we found the apartments of the family, which appeared to be ample, and suited to the condition of my host. As it was half-past seven, I had no opportunity of ascertaining how the light was obtained, or what sort of objects one looked out upon by day-light, though, in a subsequent morning visit, I thought, in this particular, London was a little out-done even in obscurity.

We had at dinner, on this occasion, Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Spring Rice, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Dumont, a Swiss, known for his remarks on Mirabeau, and other works, and two or three ladies, besides a few gen-



tllemen, connexions of the family. I have little to tell you of the entertainment, except that Sir James Mackintosh conversed a great deal, and, as usual, exceedingly well. The English do not strike me as being good talkers; even when they have more in them than the French, they appear to have less at command. Still, I think it possible to find, not a pleasanter perhaps, but a more masculine circle in this capital than in that of France. If it were possible to keep our sets distinct, we would not be very far behind them either, for, as a people, we are better talkers than the English, and our practical habits give us generally truer notions of more things than they are apt to possess; but keeping sets distinct in a town like New York, for instance, is much like stopping the flock when a single sheep has escaped.

Sir James Mackintosh, to-day, was severe on some of the provisions of the common

law, and frankly admitted that the English system cherished many gross absurdities merely on account of their antiquity. He alluded to the law of the half-blood, which he pronounced to be an atrocity. I ventured to say, that I thought there was one thing connected with the subject that was worse than the law itself, which was Sir William Blackstone's reason for it. At this he laughed, and made several pithy and sound remarks on the aptitude of men to take any absurdity on the credit of great names, and the disposition to find good reasons for practices, however irrational or unjust, that had got to form a part of our habits.

I wished heartily that some of our "reading classes" had been present, that they might have heard the manner in which one who has been "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel," venerates their idols. Were I to seek those who entertain false and exag-

gerated notions of the merits of the "Three Estates," I should not look for them here, among men of reflection and education, but among the book-worms of America, or in that portion of our people among whom the traditions of their emigrant fathers are still rife; and I would thus seek them, on the principle, that one who wished to see a fashion caricatured would not look for an example in the streets of a great capital, but in those of a remote provincial town.

The fact is, the *seemliness* of England, its studied and calculated decencies, often deceive near observers, and it is no wonder that ardent admirers, at a distance, should be misled by so specious an outside. I remember just before leaving home to have had a discussion with an intimate friend on the subject of close corporations. My friend is as honest a fellow as breathes, and, what is more, one who loves his native land; not its cats and dogs, because

they are *his* cats and dogs, or, in other words, he is not a Broadway-patriot, but is a man who has a natural sentiment in favour of the land of his fathers, takes an honest pride in its history, looks forward to the future with hope, and has a manly appreciation of the leading and distinctive features of its institutions : but, with all these and many other excellencies, he has rather a bookish predilection in favour of things that have been prettily and coquetishly set forth in English literature. Among other crotchets of this nature, he had taken it into his head that, while it might be well enough to form a broad base for society in the main, close corporations were very good things, as wheels within a wheel. I remember that he particularly instanced the New York Hospital, in proof of the justice of his notions.

I believe the New York Hospital is almost the only institution we have, that

possesses this privilege. Now it is a distinction to belong to anything exclusive, and this circumstance alone has induced a class of men to accept the trust, who would not dream of it were similar things common. This is one cause why the privilege is not abused. Another reason is, that the community gets a tone, either for good or for evil, by its prevalent habits, and the effects which flow from open corporations, and which must influence a solitary close corporation that happens to exist in their neighbourhood, would be superseded by the effects of close corporations were there more of the latter than of the former. As Rome was not built in a day, neither is one isolated fact to establish a theory.

I mention these things because the abuses of the English close-corporation system was the subject of conversation to-day, and I found the sentiment very

generally against them. Some reform is declared to be indispensable, in order to get rid of the corruption that has grown up under the practice.

I was the first to quit the table after the hint was given, and, on entering the drawing-room, I found Sir Walter Scott seated on one side of an ottoman, and his daughter on the other. They were alone, as if they had just got through with the civilities of an entrance; and finding myself so near the great writer, I went up to him and asked him how he did. He received me so coldly, and with a manner so different from that with which we had parted, that I drew back, of course, both surprised and hurt. I next tried the daughter, but she was not a whit more gracious. There remained nothing for me to do, but to turn round and enter into conversation with an agreeable countrywoman who happened to be present, and who by her simplicity and

frankness made me amends for the caustic manner of her neighbour.

In a few minutes I saw Sir Walter in the centre of a group composed of Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Rogers, Mr. Dumont, and Mr. Spring Rice. The expression of his countenance suddenly changed, and he held out his hand to me in the same cordial way in which he had stood on the landing of the hotel in the Rue St. Maur. He had not recollected me, at first; and the extreme coldness of his manner probably proceeded from being overworked in society.

I had been much hurt at the first reception, as you may well suppose, and as you will better understand when I explain the cause. Indeed, I own, even after his assurance that he did not at all recall my features when I spoke to him, I felt tempted to remind him of the answer of Turenne when he was struck by one of his valets who had mistaken his back for that of

another servant—"and if I had been Pierre, you need not have struck so hard."

When in Paris, it appeared to me that Sir Walter Scott, in his peculiar circumstances, certainly *ought*, and possibly might reap some considerable emolument from his works in America. The sheets were sold, I had understood, to the American publisher; but as an illiberal and unhandsome practice prevailed of reprinting on the American edition the moment it appeared, and of selling it at a reduced price, it was not in the power of the publisher to pay anything approaching what he otherwise would.

Although the sum paid me for a work in England was of no great amount in itself, yet, compared with the value of the two articles, it seemed so much out of all proportion greater than what I had reason to believe Scott received from America, that



I felt a sort of shame the fact should be so. I suggested therefore a plan by which I thought the state of things might be altered, and Sir Walter made to receive some small portion of that pecuniary reward for the pleasure he bestowed, of which he was so much in want, and which he so well merited.

My plan was not to his liking, although I still think it the best, and he substituted one of his own. Under his suggestion, then, I had made an effort to effect our object, but it totally failed. My zeal had outrun discretion, and I was rightly punished, perhaps, for over-estimating my influence. I communicated this disappointment by letter, and I confess it had first struck me that some displeasure at the failure (though why I did not see, for the expedient adopted was purely his own,) had mingled with his coolness. It seems

I did him injustice, as his subsequent conduct fully proved.

In touching on this subject, I am induced to recollect the want of policy as respects ourselves, and the want of justice as respects others, of our copyright law. We shall never have a manly, frank literature, if indeed we have a literature at all, so long as our own people have to contend with the unpaid contributions of the most affluent school of writers the world has ever seen.

The usual answer to this reasoning savours disgracefully of the spirit of traffic that is gradually enveloping everything in the country in its sordid grasp. If a generous sentiment be uttered in favour of the foreigner who contributes to our pleasures or our means of knowledge, it is thought to be triumphantly answered by showing that we can get for nothing that for which

we are asked to pay. But there is a much more serious objection than that of a niggardly spirit to be urged against the present system. The government is one of opinion, and the world does not contain a set of political maxims, or of social views, more dangerous to its permanency than those which characterize the greater part of the literature of the country from which we import our books. I do not mean that our principles are more nearly approximated to those of Russia, for instance, than to those of England ; but it is the very points of resemblance that create the danger, for, where there is so much that is alike, we run the risk of confounding principles. I take it that the institutions of England have more to apprehend from the influence of our own, than from the influence of those of all the rest of the world united ; and, *vice versa*, that we have, in the same pro-

portion, more to apprehend from those of England.

It is usual to say that the deference we pay to English maxims is natural, being the unavoidable consequence of our origin ; all of which is quite true : but in continuing a system by which this deference is constantly fed, we give it an unnatural and factitious duration. It is high time, not only for the respectability, but for the *safety* of the American people, that they should promulgate a set of principles that are more in harmony with their facts. The mawkish praise of *things*, that is now so much in vogue in America, is no more national than are the eulogiums which the trader lavishes on his wines, equally when he sells and when he drinks them.

These very works of Sir Walter Scott are replete with one species of danger to the American readers ; and the greater

the talents of the writer, as a matter of course, the greater is the evil. The bias of his feelings, his prejudices, I might almost say of his nature, is deference to hereditary rank ; I do not mean that deep feeling which, perhaps, inevitably connects the descendant with the glorious deeds of the ancestor, and which every man of sentiment is willing enough to admit, as it is a beautiful feature in the poetry of life,—but the deference of mere feudal and conventional laws, which have had their origin in force, and are continued by prejudice and wrong. This idea pervades his writings, not in professions, but in the deep insinuating current of feeling, and in a way silently and stealthily to carry with it the sympathies of the reader. Sir Walter Scott may be right, but if he is right our system is radically wrong, and one of the first duties of a political scheme is to protect itself.

It may be fairly enough answered, perhaps, that the influence of a writer of Scott's powers cannot properly be urged in settling principles, as one such pen in a century would be considered a prodigy. His case forms an exception, instead of a rule. We will grant this, and consider him then as one greatly below his real standard, but possessing the same peculiarity of feeling; for Sir Walter Scott is a great writer, not because he feels this deference for accidental rank, but in spite of it. His talents are a gift from nature, while his notions are the result of social position.

Now what would be the situation of a writer who should attempt, before the American public, to compete with even a diminished Scott, on American principles? He would be almost certain to fail, supposing a perfect equality of talent, from the very circumstance that he would find the minds of his readers already possessed

by the hostile notions, and he would be compelled to expel them, in the first place, before he could even commence the contest on equal terms. As if this were not disadvantage enough, under the present conditions of the copyright law he would have to contend with a price bottomed on the possession of a literary waif.

There is no just application of the free trade doctrine to this question, for a fair competition does not suppose one of the parties to obtain his articles ready made to his hands. It is impossible that our literature should make head against these odds; and until we do enjoy a manly, independent literature of our own, we shall labour under the imputation which all foreigners urge against us with more truth than is desirable, that of being but a second-hand reflection of English opinions.

There is a morbid feeling in the Ame-

rican public, it is true, which will even uphold an inferior writer, so long as he aids in illustrating the land and water which are their birthright. This weakness has been publicly charged upon them here, as resembling the love of property. The latter accusation is probably urged a little too much in an inimical spirit, but the press has fairly laid itself open to the imputation, for while it has betrayed a total and a most culpable indifference to the maintenance of American *principles*, and even of American character, it has manifested a rabid jealousy of the credit of American *things*!

The day after the dinner at Sir G—— P——'s, Sir Walter Scott did me the favour to call in St. James's Place. His manner removed any doubts on the subject of the American experiment, for nothing could be more simple and natural than his whole deportment. He spoke of



his embarrassments in a way that led me to believe he would soon remove them.\* On this subject he seemed cheerful and full of hope. "This fellow Napoleon," he said, in his quiet, humorous manner, "has given me a good lift, and I am only too well treated by my countrymen." I mentioned to him a remark of a French critic,† in speaking of the *Life of Napoleon*. This person happened to be the only one, at a large dinner, who had read the book, and everybody was curious to know what he thought of it. "Oh! it is a miserable thing," he said, "full of low images and grovelling ideas; just like Shakspeare." I thought he was sensitive on the subject, and changed the conversation.

\* Coupling this conversation with subsequent knowledge, the writer has been induced to think that Sir Walter Scott, at that time, was not aware of the extent of his own liabilities. He mentioned a sum that was greatly short of that reported to be due, soon after his death, and which held an equitable lien on the estate of Abbotsford.

† A man who has since filled one of the highest offices under the French government.

I was on the point of mentioning to him another anecdote connected with this work, and which it will, at least, do to tell you. Shortly after it appeared, one of the French journals, the *Globe* or the *Débats*, I forget which, in two or three consecutive articles, covered it with the eulogiums with which it was usual to receive the novels of the same author. In a few weeks public opinion in France took high ground against the book. The same journal now came out with a new *critique*, which commenced by saying, "that having originally received the *Memoirs* of Napoleon with the courtesy due to an illustrious name, and the French character, it was time to take an impartial view of it;" and then it set to work, in good earnest, to cut it up as one would carve a pig!

I had just published a book, and Scott kindly and delicately inquired whether it

had been disposed of to advantage in England. As compared with English books it had not, certainly ; though I thought it had done very well for a foreign book, written in a foreign spirit, and with no particular claims to English favour. He disavowed this feeling for his countrymen, and frankly offered to serve me with the publishers. As I had no cause to complain of the party into whose hands I had already fallen, but, on the contrary, reason to be satisfied, I could only thank him, and state the fact.

As I am writing of England and English character, it is no more than fair to say that the peculiarities I have mentioned did much less to impair the popularity of this work in England, than I did expect, or could have expected. There is a manliness and a feeling of pride in the better character of the country, that singularly elevates it above this littleness, and, while

I make no doubt a great many did feel this objection, I believe a majority did not. I much question, had the case been reversed, if either the French or the American public would have received a book with the same liberal spirit. I have been so sensible of this, that I have felt a strong desire to manifest it, by taking a subject from the teeming and glorious naval history of this country. What a theme this would be for one sufficiently familiar with the sea ! An American might well enough do it, too, by carrying the time back anterior to the separation, when the two histories were one. But some of their own seamen will yet bear away the prize, and, although I may envy, I do not begrudge it to them. It is their right, and let them have it.

Among the acquaintances for whom I am indebted to the letters of Mr. Spenser, is Mr. Sothey the poet. This gentleman, now no longer young, lives in a good style

here, being apparently a man of fortune and condition. He is a good specimen of the country, simple, quiet, and, unless his countenance and manners are sad hypocrites, benevolent and honest. Indeed I have seldom seen any one who has left a more favourable impression, as respects the two latter qualities, on a short acquaintance.

Mr. Sotheby invited me to dinner, pretty much as a matter of course, for all social intercourse in England, as in America, and in France, is a good deal dependent on the table. I found him living in a house that, so far as I could see, was American, as American houses used to be before the taste became corrupted by an uninstructed pretension. I was one of the first ; but Mr. Coleridge was already in the drawing-room. He was a picture of green old age ; ruddy, solid, and with a head as white as snow. His smile was benevolent,

but I had scarcely time to reconnoitre him before Sir Walter Scott appeared, accompanied by Mr. Lockhart. The latter is a genteel person, of a good carriage, with the air of a man of the world, and with a sort of Scotch-Spanish face. His smile is significant, and not a bad one for a reviewer. The wife of the Bishop of London, and two or three more, formed our party.

At table I sat directly opposite to Sir Walter Scott, with Mr. Coleridge on my left. Nothing passed during dinner worth mentioning, except a remark or two from the latter. He said that he had been employed, when secretary to Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor of Malta, to conduct a correspondence between the commander of our squadron and the government of Tripoli. I presume this must have been while Commodore Morris was in command, that officer being on very familiar terms with Admiral Ball, as the following anecd-

dote will show. The late Captain Bainbridge had a duel with an English officer at Malta, and under circumstances that enlisted the public feeling on his side, in which the latter was killed. The same day Commodore Morris breakfasted with the Governor. After breakfast, Sir Alexander Ball mentioned the affair to his guest, with proper expressions of regret, adding it would be his duty to demand Mr. Bainbridge. Of course, nothing was to be said to the contrary, and the Commodore took his leave. While pulling off to his ship, he casually observed that Mr. Bainbridge would be demanded. The midshipman of the boat reported it to the lieutenant of the deck, who sent notice to Mr. Bainbridge forthwith. In due time the official demand appeared. The Commodore sent orders to the different ships to deliver the delinquent, and received answers that he was no longer in the

squadron. He had, in truth, hurried off to Sicily in a hired felucca. This showed a good feeling on the part of Sir Alexander Ball, who always manifested a seaman's desire that we should flog the barbarians. Mr. Coleridge did not tell this anecdote, but I had it, many years since, from my old friend Commodore Morris himself.

One of Mr. Coleridge's observations was in bad taste. He professed to like most of our officers, with a very supererogatory exception in the case of Commodore Rodgers. It was easy to see he had adopted an unworthy prejudice against this officer, on account of the affair of the Little Belt. No transaction of the same nature was probably ever more thoroughly investigated than this, or grosser injustice done any man than was done Commodore Rodgers. I confess I have always viewed his conduct as singularly creditable and humane. He was fired into, and he fired



back, as a matter of course. Perceiving that his assailant made a feeble resistance, he ordered his own fire to cease, and it was not renewed until he was again assailed. He ceased a second time, from the same motive, and all in a very few minutes. His own ship was scarcely injured, and but a single boy hurt: his assailant was torn to pieces, and had his decks covered with killed and wounded.

Now, looking to our previous history; to the wanton attack on the Chesapeake, an attack for which the English government itself had felt bound to atone, it was a great proof of moderation that Commodore Rodgers did not insist on the absolute submission of the Little Belt. He might have done it, and enforced his demand with no risk to his own vessel; for as to the fanfaronade of the President's having been beaten off and silenced, and on fire, besides being contradicted by the

---

fullest testimony on oath, no seaman, who knows anything of the respective forces of the two vessels, can for a moment believe it probable.

That question has been pretty effectually settled by the Constitution, a sister ship of the President, which in open war has since whipped with ease, and carried into port, two such ships as the Little Belt, at the same time.

Nothing can better illustrate the monstrous consequences of the mental dependence to which the prevalence of English literature is helping to give an unnatural existence in America, than the manner in which Commodore Rodgers was visited by public opinion in his own country for his conduct on this occasion. Sad, indeed, is the situation of the military man, who, holding his life in his hand at the service of his native land, meets with reproach, calumny, misrepresentation and malignant

hostility from those for whom he has fought, and this because he has humbled their constant and most vindictive enemy ! Commodore Rodgers has never recovered the ground he lost in the public favour at home, for his behaviour on this occasion, marked as it was by a noble and generous forbearance. It is true, men no longer reproach him with the particular act, for after the investigation and all that has since occurred it would even exceed ordinary audacity to do so ; but thousands entertain, unknown to themselves, prejudices which are derived from this source, and which will only cease with their breath.

This is it to serve a people who will consent to form their estimates of their own servants from the calculated hostility of their enemies ! I believe we may boast of being the only nation in the universe which submits to so unjust and so dan-

gerous a domination. It unhappily forms our highest claim to originality !

Mr. Sotheby has a son a captain in the navy. This gentleman, I believe, felt the gratuitous character of Mr. Coleridge's remarks, for he expressed himself favourably as regards Commodore Rodgers, whom he had recently fallen in with on service. I contented myself by saying, a little drily that he was a highly respectable man, and a very excellent officer, which at least had the effect to change the conversation.

When the ladies had retired, the conversation turned on Homer, whom, it is understood, Mr. Sotheby is now engaged in translating. Some one remarked that Mr. Coleridge did not believe in his unity, or rather that there was any such man. This called him out, and certainly I never witnessed an exhibition as extraordinary as that which followed. It was not a discourse, but a dissertation. Scarcely any

32 CONVERSATION OF MR. COLERIDGE.

one spoke besides Mr. Coleridge, with the exception of a brief occasional remark from Mr. Sotheby, who held the contrary opinion, and I might say no one *could* speak. At moments he was surprisingly eloquent, though a little discursive, and the whole time he appeared to be perfectly the master of his subject and of his language. As near as I could judge, he was rather more than an hour in *possession of the floor*, almost without interruption. His utterance was slow, every sentence being distinctly given, and his pronunciation accurate. There seemed to be a constant struggling between an affluence of words and an affluence of ideas, without either hesitation or repetition. His voice was strong and clear, but not pitched above the usual key of conversation.] The only peculiarity about it was a slight observable burring of the *r r rs*, but

scarcely more than what the language properly requires. ]

Once or twice, when Mr. Sotheby would attempt to say a word on his side of the question, he was permitted to utter just enough to give a leading idea, but no argument, when the reasoning was taken out of his mouth by the essayist, and continued, pro and con, with the same redundant and eloquent fluency. [ I was less struck by the logic than by the beauty of the language, and the poetry of the images. Of the theme, in a learned sense, I knew too little to pretend to any verbal or critical knowledge: but he naturally endeavoured to fortify his argument by the application of his principles to familiar things; and here, I think, he often failed. In fact, the exhibition was much more wonderful than convincing. ]

[ At first I was so much struck with the

affluent diction of the poet, as scarcely to think of anything else; but when I did look about me, I found every eye fastened on him. [Scott sat immoveable as a statue, with his little grey eyes looking inward and outward, and evidently considering the whole as an exhibition rather than as an argument; though he occasionally muttered, "eloquent!"—"wonderful!"—"very extraordinary!" ] Mr. Lockhart caught my eye once, and he gave a very hearty laugh, without making the slightest noise, as if he enjoyed my astonishment. When we rose, however, he expressed his admiration of the speaker's eloquence.

[The dissertations of Mr. Coleridge cannot properly be brought in comparison with the conversation of Sir James Mackintosh. One lectures, and the other converses. There is a vein of unpretending philosophy, and a habit of familiar ana-

lysis in the conversation of the latter, that causes you to remember the substance of what he has said ; while the former, though synthetic and philosophical as a verbal critic, rather enlists the imagination than any other property of the mind. Mackintosh is willing enough to listen ; while Coleridge reminded me of a barrel to which every other man's tongue acted as a spigot, for no sooner did the latter move than it set his own contents in a flow.]

We were still at table, when the constant raps at the door gave notice that the drawing-room was filling above. Mr. Coleridge lectured on, through it all, for half an hour longer, when Mr. Sotheby rose. The house was full of company assembled to see Scott. He walked deliberately into a maze of petticoats, and, as he had told me at Paris, let them play with his mane as much as they pleased.



I had an engagement, and went to look for my hat, which, to escape the fangs of the servants, who have an inconvenient practice here of taking your hat out of the drawing-room while you are at dinner, I had snugly hid under a sofa. The Bishop of London was seated directly above it, and completely covered it with his petticoat. Mr. Sotheby, observing that I was aiming at something there, kindly inquired what I wanted. I told him I was praying for the translation of the Bishop of London, that I might get my hat; and, marvellous as it may seem, he has already been made Archbishop of Canterbury!

Just as I was going away, one or two ladies, whom I had the honour to know, made their appearance, and I remained a moment to speak to them. You will remember that congress is just now debating the subject of the protective system. You cannot, however, know the interest that is

felt on this subject here. I had a specimen of it to-night, in the conversation of these ladies, and in that of one or two more with whom the detention brought me in discourse. When the women occupy themselves with such subjects, it is fair to infer that the nation feels their magnitude. Europe generally, or the north of Europe rather, possesses a class of female politicians that is altogether unknown to us.

We have party ladies, as well as England, who enter into the feelings of their male friends ; who hate, abuse, and blindly admire, with the best of them ; but how rare is it to find one who is capable of instructing a child in even the elementary principles of its country's interests, duties, and rights ? A part of this indifference is owing to the natural condition of America, which places her above the necessity of the ordinary apprehensions and efforts ; but it would be much better were our

girls kept longer at their books, before they are turned into the world to run their light-hearted career of trifling.

With one lady I had a short but a sharp discussion on political economy to-night. She was thoroughly free trade, and this is a doctrine that I hold to be bottomed on a complete fallacy. It would be quite as easy to prove, in my opinion, that liberty can exist without government, as to show that nations can equally profit by trade, without consulting their peculiar circumstances. She asked me if trade did not consist in an exchange of equivalents. I thought not, in fact, but in an exchange of *apparent* equivalents. I did not believe that the Indian who sold a beaver skin for half a dollar in the forest, which, after deducting charges, brought four or five dollars of profit in the market, obtained anything more than an *apparent* equivalent. He

was a loser by his ignorance and his social facts, while the trader was in the same proportion a gainer. But free trade would permit the Indian to bring his own peltry down, and pocket the difference himself. True, as a *theory* ; but life is composed of stubborn *facts*, that laugh at theories of this sort. He cannot come. Could restriction supply a remedy ? Certainly ; by appointing a clever agent, for instance, at a salary, to dispose of their peltry in common for them, and by excluding the traders from their territory they might get double or treble the present prices. Their agent might cheat them. So does the trader. The buyers would go elsewhere. They cannot : the Indian has a monopoly of the article. Did I not believe free trade increased commerce, and indirectly diffused its advantages over the whole world ? I made no doubt that many restrictions were

absurd, and in this fact I saw all the true argument that can be adduced in favour of free trade.

Let us imagine a garden filled with fine fruit, on which the owner sets a moderate price. He refuses, however, to open his gates but once a week, and half his fruit is lost in consequence. This is an abuse of restriction. Convinced of his error, he throws his gates open altogether, and bids all enter and help themselves; and, to render things equal, he prohibits the use of ladders, or of climbing. A tall man enters and picks as much as he wants; but the short man at his side can reach nothing. But free trade would let him take a ladder. True, if he could carry one; but he can get none, or is too feeble. Now, knowledge, capital, practice, establishments, skill, and even natural aptitude, compose the difference in stature between nations; and the laws must provide the ladders,

or the shorter will go altogether without fruit, or get it at the tall man's prices. But competition would regulate this, as other things, and the market would settle down into a fair system of equivalents. It is easy to make this out in theory, but difficult to prove it in practice. We usually expect too much from competition, whose natural tendency, in trade, is to combination. The thousand interests of life derange the action of the most ingenious theory.

The world has never yet seen a fair exchange of equivalents in traffic, and I doubt if it ever will. It is said we can't buy more than we sell, and that the balance of trade regulates itself. This will do on paper, but it is not true in fact. We may sell too low and buy too dear. When England takes a pound of our cotton at ten cents, and sells it back again at a dollar, leaving a clear profit of fifty cents, by

which her manufacturers roll in their coaches, while the planter is living from hand to mouth, we are pretty clearly doing one or the other. But let natural efforts regulate this, and do not have recourse to laws. When a strong man gets a weak one down, if the liberation of the latter depends on his natural efforts, he will never rise.

Here I bade my fair antagonist good night, as I do you.

---

## LETTER XII.

TO WILLIAM JAY, ESQ., BEDFORD, NEW YORK.

The House of Lords.—Chamber of Deputies.—Marquis of Salisbury.—Affected Pronunciation.—Parliament of England.—The King and the Parliament.—Peers and Commoners.—Public opinion.—The Mercantile Class.—The Public Press.—The Church.—English Aristocracy.—Nobility and Gentry.—Mr. Brougham.

ALTHOUGH I had been several times at St. Stephen's, I never, until quite lately, got into the House of Lords. A young connexion, who happens to be travelling in Europe, and myself, have however just made a visit to the Hospital of Incurables. Several members of this house have offered to procure permission for me, but it has always been in a way that has rendered the civility anything but a favour. It is a marked fault in English manners that they extend the factitious system, by which



every concession of politeness of this nature has the appearance of being sought, to strangers.\*

I may say the same thing of the House of Commons, into which I have had a dozen offers of admission beneath the gallery, though but once in a way that I did not feel it to be a humiliation to accept. The exception was a case of thoroughly gentlemanlike attention, and I record it with the greater satisfaction.

\* The writer had a ludicrous specimen of this feeling, at a later day, in Italy. An English minister's wife gave a great ball, and applications were constantly made for tickets. As the town was small, this ball made a great sensation, and every one was talking of it. It was no great sacrifice for the family of the writer to preserve their self-respect on this occasion, as they lived retired from choice. Hints began to be thrown out, and questions asked if they had yet *procured* tickets. At eight o'clock of the very night of the entertainment, these important tickets arrived *unashed*! Of course, no notice was taken of them. It will be remembered that all this *dog-in-the-mangerism* had nothing to do with the customs of the country in which the parties were, it being usual for the natives to give their guests more than two hours' notice, when they wished to see them at balls. This social *convoitise* on one side, and coquetry on the other, distinguish the English circles all over Europe.

As I am writing with the intention to supply comparisons of national manners, I will relate a recent occurrence that took place at Paris. A party of American travellers arrived at the door of the Chamber of Deputies, and, in the absence of all other means of getting in, they took the bold measure of sending their cards to the president, with a request to be admitted, and immediately had convenient places assigned them. I do not say I would imitate this course, but it is impossible not to admire the courtesy which overlooked the mistake.

There are men who ply about the doors of the two Houses of Parliament, to show strangers the way into them ; for it is almost as much an affair of management and bribery to get into St. Stephen's chapel, after one is elected, as it is to get the legal return. We contracted with a man at the outer door to deliver us safe in the

House of Lords, for three shillings sterling each. The rogue carried us no farther than the first inner door, however, where he turned us over to one a step above him in dignity, coolly demanding a shilling for his pains. Our new guide carried us through a door or two more, when we reached the real vendor of places. We paid the second guide another shilling, and the stipulated price went into the hands of the regular box-office man.

I am far from complaining of the practice of paying for these admissions, though the price is too high. Members, you will remember, can grant admissions. It is quite impossible for every one to be present, and, in a town like London, the half-crown may be a very healthful check, both morally and physically. The legislative body that has not the power to clear its hall would become contemptible. The publicity of congress is only commanded

through its journals, the admission of strangers being purely a matter of favour. Here the latter are present only by a fiction, as indeed they are sometimes absent ; for frequently when ordered to withdraw, they do not budge. The same principles substantially regulate the proceedings of congress and of parliament, though there exists one difference between them that is founded on a fundamental distinction in the governments. In congress the vote is taken openly, in parliament it is not. It is a great pity that, while we admit of this affinity in forms, we do not always perceive the essential difference that exists in substance.

You know already that the hall of the House of Lords is divided into three divisions,—that around the throne, that which contains the peers, and that which is set apart for the public. I should think the latter, which is termed below the bar, might

hold two or three hundred people, standing. There are no seats ; and even the reporters are compelled to write on their knees, or to sit on the floor. Luckily for them, there is little, in general, to report.\* There is also a small area around the fire-place, which appears to be a no-man's-land ; for I heard a commoner ask a peer lately, whether it was permitted for the members of the other house to occupy it, and the answer was an admission of ignorance, though the peer rather thought it was. The members of the commons, however, usually stand around the throne. Mr. Wortley, a gentleman I had seen in America, was standing on the steps of the throne to-night, while his father, Lord Wharncliffe, made a speech.

We found a thin house, and plenty of space below the bar. The Duke of Wel-

\* This arrangement was subsequently changed.

---

lington was on the ministerial bench, and not far from him was my dinner acquaintance, the Bishop of ———, in his lawn sleeves. With this exception and that of another bishop, who entered in the course of the evening, besides the chancellor and the other officers of the house, I saw no one that was not in ordinary attire. All but the bishop and the latter wore their hats, and they wore their precious wigs. The chancellor looked like a miller with his head thrust through his wife's petticoat. As for my bishop, he appeared fidgety and out of his place.

Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Grey, and Lord Holland, were all in their places; but neither said anything but the first, who spoke for a few minutes. When we entered, I do not think there were twenty peers in their seats, though the number doubled at a later hour. These twenty were mostly clustered around the table,

and their meeting strongly resembled that of an ordinary committee. The Marquis of Salisbury, a descendant of Burleigh, was on his feet when we came in, discussing some point connected with the game laws. I doubt if his great ancestor knew half as much of the same subject. The tone was conversational and quiet, and, altogether, I never was in a public body that had so little the air of one. I could not divest myself of the idea of a *conseil de famille* that had met to consult each other in a familiar way about the disposition of some of their possessions, while the members of the house who were listening, resembled the children who were excluded by their years.

Although one so seldom hears the term "my lord" in the world, it was pretty well bandied among the speakers to-night. They pronounced it "*my lurds*," the English uniformly sounding the possessive

pronoun in question more like the Italians than we do, so that it makes "mee lurds."

I was a good deal puzzled, when I first arrived here, to account for many abuses of the language in the middling classes, and which sometimes are met with in the secondary articles of the public prints. "Think of *me* going without a hat," is a sentence of the sort I mean. It is intended to say, "Think of *my* going," &c.; but, from a confusion between the sound and the spelling, the personal pronoun is used by illiterate people instead of the possessive. This species of illiteracy, by the way, extends a good way up English society.

I take it, the polite way of pronouncing this word is by a sort of elision — as m'horse, m'dog, m'gun; and that *my* horse, *my* dog, *my* gun, the usual American mode, and *me* horse, *me* dog, *me* gun, the English counterpart, are equally wrong;



the first by an offensive egotism, and the last from offensive ignorance. I think more noble peers, however, said "*me* lurds," than "m'lurds," though the formal tone of public speaking is seldom favourable to simple or accurate pronunciation. It usually plays the deuce with prosody, unless one has a naturally easy elocution. The French, in this respect, have the advantage of us, their language having no emphatic syllables. A Frenchman will often talk an hour without a true argument or a false quantity.

Lord Salisbury appeared to have a knowledge of his subject, which, in itself, was scarcely worthy to occupy the time of the peers of Great Britain. I do not mean that game is altogether beneath one's notice, and still less that the moral enormities to which the English game laws have given birth, do not require a remedy; but that local authority ought

to exist to regulate all such minor interests : first, on account of their relative insignificance ; and, secondly, because the reasoning that may apply to one county, may not fitly apply to another.

You may perhaps be ignorant that, by the actual law, game cannot be sold at all in England. My wife was ill lately, and I desired our landlady to send and get her a bird or two ; but the good woman held up her hands and declared it was impossible, as there was a fine of fifty pounds for buying or selling game. The law is evaded, however ; hares, it is said, passing from hand to hand constantly in London under the name of *lions* !

I remember once, in travelling on our frontiers, to have received an apology from an innkeeper for not having anything fit to eat, because he had only venison, wild pigeons, and brook trout. I asked him what he wanted better. He did not

know, "but the gentleman had quite likely been used to pork!" Absurd as all this seems, I remember, after serving a season on the great lakes, to have *asked* for boiled pork and turnips, as a treat. Our physical enjoyments are mere matters of habit, while the intellectual, alone, are based on a rock. The worst tendency we have at home is manifested by a rapacity for money, which, when obtained, is to be spent in little besides eating and drinking.

Lord Carnarvon said a few words, and Lord Wharnccliffe made a speech, but it was all in the same conversational tone. The peers do not address the chancellor in speaking, but their own body; hence the constant recurrence of the words "my lurds." The chancellor does not occupy a seat at one end of the area, like a speaker, but he is placed on his woolsack, considerably advanced towards the table.

I should have been at a loss to know the

members, but for a plain tradesman-like looking man at my elbow, who appeared to be familiar with the house, and who was there to show the lions to a country friend. I was much amused by this person's observations, which were a strange medley of habitual English deference for rank and natural criticism. "There," said he, "that is Lord L——, and he looks just like a journeyman carpenter." His friend, however, was too much awe-struck to relish this familiarity.

I was a little disappointed with the *physique* of the peers, who are by no means a particularly favourable specimen of the English gentlemen in this respect. Perhaps I have never seen enough of them together to form a correct opinion. A Lord A——, whom I met at Paris, told me that his father had taken the trouble to count the pigtails in the House of Lords at the trial of the late queen,

and that he found they considerably exceeded a hundred. I was aware this body was somewhat behind the age in certain essentials; but I did not know, until then, that this peculiarity extended to that precise portion of the head.

The peers of Great Britain, considered as a political body, are usurpers in the worst sense of the word. The authority they wield, and the power by which it is maintained, are the results neither of frank conquest nor of legally delegated trusts, but of insidious innovations effected under the fraudulent pretences of succouring liberty. They were the principal, and, at that time, the natural agents of the nation in rescuing it from the tyranny of the Stuarts, and, profiting by their position, they have gradually perverted the institutions to their own aggrandisement and benefit. This is substantially the history of all aristocracies, which commence by

curbing the power of despots, and end by substituting their own.

There exists a radical fault in the theory of the British government, which supposes three estates possessed of equal legislative authority. Such a condition of the body politic is a moral impossibility. Two would infallibly combine to depose the other, and then they would quarrel which was to reap the fruits of victory. The very manner in which the popular rights were originally obtained in England, go to prove that nothing of the sort entered into the composition of the government at the commencement. Boroughs were created by royal charters. Even the peers were emanations of the royal will, and much, as might be expected, the creatures of the King's pleasure.

In the progress of events, the servants became too strong for their masters. They set aside one dynasty and established an-

other, under the form of law. Since that time they have been gradually accumulating force, until all the branches of government are absorbed in one; not absolutely in its ordinary action, it is true, but in its fundamental power. Parliament has got to be absolute, and the strictly legislative part of it, by establishing the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, has obtained so much control over the part which is termed the executive, as to hold it completely within its control.

An Englishman is very apt to affirm that the President of the United States has more power than the King of England. This he thinks is establishing the superior liberty of his own country. He is right enough in his fact, but strangely wrong in the inference. The government of the United States has no pretension to a trinity in its elements, though it maintains one in its action; and that of Great Britain pre-

---

tends to one in its elements, while it has a unity in its action. The President has more real power than the King, because he actually wields the authority attributed to him in the Constitution ; and the King has less real authority than the President, because he does not exercise the authority attributed to him by the Constitution, even as the Constitution is now explained, different as that explanation is from what it was a century since.

Were the King of England to name a Ministry that did not please his Parliament, which in substance is pleasing those who hold the power to make members, that Ministry could not stand a week after Parliament assembled. If the two Houses of Parliament were composed of men of different interests, or of different social elements, there would still be something like an apparent balance in the composition of the state ; but they are not.



The peers hold so much political control in the country, as, virtually, to identify the two bodies, so far as interests are concerned. Without this, there would be no harmony in the government; for where there are separate bodies of equal nominal authority in a state, one must openly control the others, or all must secretly act under the same indirect influence; not the influence of a common concern in the public good, for rulers never attend to that until they have first consulted their own interests as far as their powers will conveniently allow. In point of fact, then, the peers of England and the commons of England are merely modifications of the same social *castes*.

In looking over the list of the members of the House of Commons, I find one hundred and sixty with those titles which show that they are actually the sons of peers; and when we remember the extent and in-

fluence of intermarriages, it would not probably exceed the truth were I to say that more than half the lower house stand, as regards the upper, either in the relation of son, son-in-law, brother, or brother-in-law, nephew, or uncle.\*

But nobility is by no means the test of this government. It is, strictly, a landed, and not a titled, aristocracy. There are seventy-four baronets among the commons, and these are usually men of large landed estates. If we take the whole list, we shall not probably find a hundred names that, socially, belong to any other class than that of the aristocracy strictly so called, or that are not so nearly allied to them in interests as virtually to make the

\* Even in the parliament of 1832, I find no less than seventy-four of the *eldest* sons and *heirs* of peers sitting as commoners. Among them are Lords Surrey, Tavistock, Worcester, Douro, Graham, Mandeville, and Chandos; all of whom are the eldest sons of Dukes. In the parliament of 1830, were also Lords Seymour, Euston, and Blandford, of the same rank.

House of Commons identical, as a social caste, with the House of Lords. It is of little moment whether these bodies are hereditary or elective, so long as both represent the same set of interests.

The aristocracy of England is checked less by any of the contrivances of the state, than by the extra-constitutional power of public opinion. This is a fourth estate in England, and a powerful estate everywhere, that, in an age like this, perhaps does more than written compacts to restrain abuses. It has even curbed despotism over more than half of Europe. As the influence of public opinion will always bear the impress of the moral civilization of a people, England is better off, in this particular, than most of her neighbours; and it is probably one great reason why her aristocracy has not fleeced the nation more than it has, though I don't know that it has anything to reproach itself

with in the way of neglect on this score.

The perpetuity of the ascendancy of the English aristocracy is a question much mooted just now, and I have frequently heard, in private, sturdy and frank opinions on the subject. There are three prominent facts that, I think, must soon produce essential changes in this feature of the English system. In carrying out the scheme of spreading the power of the peers over the commons, as it has been done by personal wealth, individuals of the body have become offensively powerful to the majority of their own order. Influence is getting into too few hands to be agreeable to those who, having so much, would wish to share in all. This is one evil; and I think, when reform does occur, as occur it must, that there will be a great effort to arrest it, when this one point shall have been rectified.

But there is a far more powerful foe to the existing order of things. The present system is based on property, for, with a King without authority, the power of the Lords, unsupported by that of the Commons, would not be worth a straw in this age; and, though land may not be, the balance of power, as it is connected with money, is rapidly changing hands in England. There has arisen, within the last fifty years, a tremendous money-power, that was formerly unknown to the country. Individuals got rich in the last century where classes get rich now; and instead of absorbing the new men, as was once done, the aristocracy is in danger of being absorbed by them.

It would not be in nature for a large class of men to become rich without wishing to participate in power. It is a necessity in money to league itself with authority. Were it not for the natural

---

antipathy between trade and democracy, the mercantile and manufacturing classes of England would make common cause with the people, and change the government at once: but the affluent dread revolutions; the debt of England is a mortgage on the rich; and, most of all, commerce detests popular rights. It is, in itself, an aristocracy of wealth. When the hour comes, however, it will be found struggling to equalise the advantages of money, I think.

The third danger arises from the fictions of the system. No power on earth can resist the assaults of reason, if constantly exposed to them, since it is the language of natural truth. Liberty of the press is incompatible with exclusion in politics, or, at least, with an exclusion that proscribes a majority. Neither throne nor senate can withstand the constant attacks of arguments that address themselves equally

to the sense of right and to the passions of men. The alternatives are to submit, or to repress.

Now, while the aristocracy has been silently and steadily extending its net over England, it has always been with the professions of a monarchy. It was an offence to speak evil of the king, when it was no offence to speak evil of the aristocrats. The law protected a fiction, while it overlooked a reality. It is too late to change. Feeling an indifference to a power that was little more than nominal, the press has been permitted to deal freely even with the throne of late, and England would not bear a law which denied her the privilege of censuring the aristocrats. The public mind, on this point, appears to be under the influence of a re-action. The French Revolution so far quickened the jealousies of the English government, that prosecutions for sedition were carried to

---

extremes under Mr. Pitt, and, now that the danger is abated, something like a licence on the other side has followed.

The Church will do more to uphold the present system than the aristocracy, although there are two sides even to the effect of the influence of the church. It sustains and it enfeebles the government, through dissent. It sustains, by enlisting the prejudices of churchmen on its side, and it enfeebles by throwing large masses necessarily into the opposition.\* On the whole, however, it aids greatly in upholding the pre-

\* Just before the writer left England, the Lords threw out the bill for the repeal of the Test Laws. Shortly after, the matter was brought up anew, and the authorities of orthodox Oxford were assembled to petition *against* the measure. On the day of meeting, however, to the astonishment of everybody, speeches were made in *favour* of the repeal by several prominent men. Of course the petition was for repeal, for party is just as well drilled in Europe as it is with us.

A few months later I had the whole secret explained. A leading dissenter, now a member of parliament, told me that he and his friends gave the government to understand distinctly, that if the Test Laws were not repealed, the



sent order of things. One of the most distinguished statesmen of this country observed to me pithily, the other day, that we enjoyed a great advantage in having no established church. I understood him to mean that he found the establishment of England a millstone around the neck of reform.

One who should judge of the character of the English aristocracy by inferences drawn solely from the political system, and from the warnings of history, would not come to a fairer decision than he who should judge of the condition of democracy

dissenters of England would make common cause with the Catholics of Ireland, and overturn the establishment.

The following anecdote is also derived from the best authority. About the time nullification was rife in America, a gentleman, also in parliament, went from London to a dinner in the country. He found the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of —— among the company. "What news do you bring us from town, Mr. ——?" asked the consecrated Christian. "No news, my lord." "No news! We were told there was *good* news." "To what do you allude, my lord?" "Why, we were told there is every reason to expect a speedy dissolution of the American Union."

in America by the state of the Grecian and Italian republics. There is much, very much, that is redeeming here; though it belongs rather to incidents of the national facts, than to the effects of purely political causes. As one of the chief of the latter, however, may be mentioned the openness to censure and comment that has arisen from the fraud of considering the government in theory, and in the penal laws, as a monarchy, when it has so few genuine claims to the character. While this circumstance exposes the real rulers to constant assaults, and, as I think, to ultimate defeat, it has, for them, the redeeming advantage (in some measure redeeming, at least) of putting them on their guard, of admonishing them of their danger, and of checking and correcting the natural tendency to abuses. It is, in fact, a means of bringing the moral civilization and knowledge of the age to bear directly

on their public and private deportment. Viewed in the first sense, it is usual here to say that the families of the peers are as exemplary as those of any other class of subjects. It is absurd to make any essential distinction between the nobility and the gentry on such a point, for they are identified in all but the mere circumstance that the former are a titled division of the aristocracy.

As between *castes*, I do not believe there is any essential moral difference anywhere. Each has the vices and the virtues of its condition; and if leisure and wealth tempt to indulgences, they also supply the means of those higher mental pleasures which do quite as much as preaching towards restraining evil. Individuals of rank do certainly abuse their privileges, and others profit by their insignificance. There are cases of profligate vice among the English nobility, beyond a question; but,

as a whole, I believe they are externally as decent and moral as the same number of any class in the kingdom.

We misconceive the character of aristocracy quite as much as they misconceive the character of democracy. Both are essentially tempered by the spirit of the age. The practice of marrying for worldly views causes rather more breaches of the marriage vows among the women than would otherwise be the case, though they are certainly better than many other European nations in this respect. The English say that the world sees the worst of them, in this particular, a sentiment unknown to the women of the Continent, causing English women to elope, when they have yielded to an illicit attachment. I do not believe in either the fact or the reason. The disclosures prove that they are discovered half the time; and the elopements that are voluntary, probably proceed from the fact that

the law allows divorces and re-marriages,—an advantage, if indeed it be one, that is denied Catholics. This is the weak side of the morals of the English nobility, among whom there are probably a larger proportion of divorces than among the same number of any other Protestants. The separations *à mensâ et thoro* are also comparatively numerous.

I have, first and last, been brought more or less in personal contact with a large number of the nobility of this realm. I have generally found them well-mannered and well-educated, and sedulous to please. There is a certain species of conventional knowledge, that belongs in a measure to their peculiar social position, that is diffused among them with surprising equality. I can liken it most to the sort of inherent tastes and tact that distinguish the children of gentlemen from those who are equally well

taught in other respects, but have not had the same early advantages of association, and which frequently render them companionable and agreeable when there is little beneath the surface. Judged by a severer standard, they are like other educated men, of course, though their constant intercourse with the highest classes of a nation distinguished for learning, taste, and research, probably imparts to them, as a body, an air of knowledge that is, in some degree, above the level of their true intelligence. Of a good many of those with whom I have even conversed, I know too little to speak with sufficient understanding; but among all those with whom I have, I should find it difficult to name one who has left on my mind the impression of vapid ignorance that so often besets us in our own circles. Something is probably owing to their better tone of manners, which, if it does nothing else, by

inculcating modesty of deportment, prevents exposure. On the other hand, I could not mention half a dozen who left behind them the impression of men possessing talents above the ordinary level. Perhaps, however, this is in a just proportion to their numbers. Lord Grey, I have little doubt, has one of the most masculine and vigorous minds among the peers; and I think it will be found, should he ever reach the upper house, that Lord Stanley will possess one of the acutest.

The English appear to me to encourage a fault in their eloquence, that is common to their literature and their manners. The incessant study of the Roman classics has imparted a taste for a severity of style and manner that is better suited to the comprehensive tongue of the ancients, than to our own ampler vocabulary. From this, or from some other cause, they push simplicity to affectation; or, admitting that

there is an unconsciousness of the peculiarity, to coldness. This is observable in their ordinary manners, and in their style of parliamentary elocution; the latter, in particular, usually wanting the feeling necessary to awaken sympathy. As respects the Lords, it is rare, I fancy, to hear anything approaching oratory, the delivery and the language being conversational rather than oratorical. They appear to be afraid of falling into the forensic, as it might detract from a speaker's glory to have it proved upon him he was a lawyer!

The English nobleman, however, is usually above the miserable affectations of the drilled coldness of the automaton school. He appears to have imbibed a portion of the amenity of the high society of the Continent. In this respect the men are better than the women, as our women are said to be better than the men. I



think one would apply the term *gracieuse* to fewer English women than common, though the men of rank merit that of *aimable* oftener than it is adjudged to them. I have often, quite often, met with English women of winning exterior; but their deportment has almost always appeared to be the result of their feelings, inducing one to esteem, as much as to admire them; and, although one of ordinary capacity most respects this trait, where it is wanting he could wish to find its substitute. In reference to the points of a factitious coldness of manner, and a want of feeling in oratory, I should say the peers, as compared to the class next beneath them, are most obnoxious to the latter charge, and the least to the former.

A day or two after my first visit, I went again to the House of Lords to hear Mr. Brougham speak in the case of an appeal. I found but two peers present, the

---

chancellor, and, I believe, Lord Carnarvon. The former sat on the woolsack buried in flax, as usual, and the latter occupied one of the lateral benches, with his hat on. The appeal was made from a decision of the chancellor, who had ordered that a father should not have the custody of his sons. It was an extraordinary proceeding, in appearance at least; though reflection somewhat lessens its absurdity. In point of fact, owing to a change in the administration, the chancellor from whom the appeal was made, was not the person who now presided; but, had not this accidental change intervened, it would have been otherwise. Mr. Brougham spoke several hours, and it would have been irksome to him, indeed, to be compelled to argue, on appeal, a case over again, that had already been presented to the same ears! When one comes to consider the matter, however, he finds that there are many lawyers

among the Lords, who, if they do not hear the arguments, may read them ; and who can rely on their own knowledge in making up their minds, when they come to the vote. The defect was, therefore, one of form rather than one of substance, though it was strangely deficient in appearances, a fault the least likely to occur in this government.

---

## LETTER XIII.

TO WILLIAM JAY, ESQ. BEDFORD, N. Y.

The People of England.—Reform.—Condition of England.  
—Taxes and Commerce.—Condition of the Aristocracy.  
—New Peerage.—Institutions of England.—A Money-  
Government.—Wealth of Lord Grosvenor ; and of the  
Nobility and Gentry.—Power of the Aristocracy.—Mo-  
rals of the Upper Classes.—The Professions.—Manliness  
of the Gentry.—Prejudices of the Aristocracy.—National  
Prejudices.—Respect paid to Rank.—Princely Nobility.

WERE the people of England free from the prejudices of their actual situation, and, absolutely without a political organization, assembled to select a polity for their future government, it is probable that the man who should propose the present system would at once be set down as a visionary or a fool. Could things be reversed, how-

ever, and the nation collected for the same purpose, under the influence of the opinions that now prevail, the proposer of the system that would be very likely to be adopted in the former case, would be lucky if he escaped with his ears. It is safer that facts should precede opinions in the progress of political meliorations, than that opinions should precede facts; though it would be better still could the two march *pari passu*.

All essential changes in the control of human things must be attended by one of two species of contests, the struggles of those who would hasten, or the struggles of those who would retard, events. The active portion of the former are usually so small a minority, that it is pretty accurate to affirm they are more useful as pioneers than as pilots; while it is in the nature of things that the latter should gradually lose

---

their power by desertions, until compelled by circumstances to yield.

The considerations connected with these truths teach us, that reform is generally a wiser remedy than revolution : still it must be recollected that the progress of things is not always in the right direction. Artificial and selfish combinations frequently supplant the natural tendency to improvement ; and a people, by waiting the course of events, might sometimes be the supine observers of the process of forging their own chains. In all such cases, unless the current can be turned, it must be made to lose its influence by being thrown backward.

In continuing the subject of the last letter, I am of opinion that the present system of England is to undergo radical alterations by the safest of the two remedies, that of reform, — a denial of which

will certainly produce convulsions. The hereditary principle, as extended beyond the isolated abstraction of a monarch, is offensive to human pride, not to say natural justice ; and I believe the world contains no instance of an enlightened people long submitting to it, unless it has been relieved by some extraordinary mitigating circumstances of national prosperity. The latter has been the fact with England ; but, as is usually the case with all exceptions to general rules, it has brought with it a countervailing principle that, sooner or later, will react on the system.

Hitherto England has had a monopoly of available knowledge. Protected by her insular situation, industry has taken refuge in the island ; and, fostered by franchises, it has prospered beyond all former example. The peculiar construction of the empire, in which national character and conquest have been mutually cause and effect,

---

has turned a flood of wealth into that small portion of it which, being the seat of power, regulates the tone of the whole, as the heart controls the pulsations of the body. This is the favourable side of the question, and on it are to be found the temporal advantages that have induced men to submit to an ascendancy that they might otherwise resist.

The unfavourable is peculiarly connected with the events of the last thirty years. In order to counteract the effects of the French revolution, the aristocracy carried on a war that has cost the country a sum of money which, still hanging over the nation in the shape of debt, is likely to produce a radical change in the elements of its prosperity. In the competition of industry, which is now spreading itself throughout Christendom, it is absolutely necessary to keep down the price of labour in England, to prevent being undersold in



foreign markets, and to keep up the prices of food in order to pay taxes. These two causes united have created an excess of pauperism that hangs like a dead weight on the nation, and which helps to aid the rivalry of foreign competition. Taking the two together, about one hundred and thirty millions of dollars annually are paid by the nation, and much the greater part as a fine proceeding from the peculiar form of the government ; for the sacrifices that were made, were only to be expected from those who were contending especially for their own privileges.

As the territories of England were impregnable, no mere monarch could have carried on the system of Mr. Pitt, since the rich would not have submitted to it ; and as for the people, or the mass, there would have been no sufficient motive. In order to appreciate these efforts, and their consequences, it will be necessary to con-

sider the vast annual sums expended by Great Britain during the late wars, and then look around for the benefits. One undeniable result is, I take it, that industry is quitting the kingdom, under the influence of precisely the same causes as those by which it was introduced. I do not mean so much that capitalists depart, as they left Flanders,—for the scale on which things are now graduated, renders more regular changes necessary,—but that the skill emigrates, to avoid the exactions of the state. I may, however, go further, and add that capital also quits the country. It takes longer to subvert the sources of national than of individual prosperity, and we are not to look for results in a day. Still these results, I think, are already apparent. They appear in the moderated tone of this government, in its strong disinclination to war, and, in fact, in an entire change in its foreign policy.

It is quite obvious that the English aristocracy is existing in a state of constant alarm. The desperate expedient of Mr. Pitt,—that of undertaking a crusade against popular rights,—is already producing its reaction. It is seldom that the human mind can be brought to an unnatural tension on one side, without recoiling to the other extreme as soon as liberated. Men are constantly vibrating around truth, the passions and temporary interests acting as the weights to keep the pendulum in motion.

The result of the present condition of the English aristocracy is to put them, in a political as well as a social sense, on their good behaviour. Although so great a proportion of the peculiar embarrassments of Great Britain may be traced with sufficient clearness to the exclusive features of the government, there probably never has been a period in the history of the

nation when the power of the few has been so undisputed in practice, or its exercise more under the sense of correction.

I have already said, that one of the consequences of the forced prosperity that grew out of the system of Mr. Pitt was, to raise up a dangerous social caste, that had no immediate connexion with the government, while it became too powerful to be overlooked. Sir James Mackintosh, in his *History of the Revolution of 1688*, has said, that the constitution attributes the power of creating peers to the king, "either to reward public service, or to give dignity to important offices, or to add ability or knowledge to a part of the legislature, or to repair the injuries of time by the addition of new wealth to an aristocracy which may have decayed." Nothing is wanting to the truth of this exposition, but to add the words, "or anything else." Mr. Pitt extended these constitutional mo-

tives by including that of neutralising an antagonist wealth, which might become dangerous to the particular wealth already in possession of power. The peerage has been essentially doubled since the accession of George III. In addition to these accessions to the House of Lords, a great number of Irish peers have been created, who are also a species of direct political aristocrats. Social bribes have been liberally dealt out in addition, by an enormous creation of baronets, of whom there are now near a thousand in the empire.

But this is a mode of maintaining a system that will soon exhaust itself. Knighthood, except in particular cases, is no longer a distinction for a gentleman, and would be refused by any man of a decided social position, unless under circumstances to which I have elsewhere alluded. The exceptions are in the cases of especial professional merit. A lawyer, an artist, a

physician, or a soldier, might be knighted without discredit ; but scarcely an ordinary civilian. It would throw a sort of ridicule about a man or a woman of fashion to be termed " Sir John " or " My lady," without these alleviating circumstances.

The case is a little, but not much, better, as respects baronets. I should think it would no longer be easy to get a man of family, who is familiar with the world, to accept of a baronetcy, except as a professional reward. As we say in America, " the business is overdone : " even Irish peerages are not in favour.

You will readily understand the approaching necessity for change in the institutions of England, by looking a little more closely at facts. The danger comes equally from the rich and the poor : from the rich, because they are excluded from power by the action of the borough system ; and from the poor, because they are reduced

to the minimum of physical enjoyments, and are formidable by numbers as well as by their intelligence.

As regards the rich, though the scale of pretension has gradually been extending itself with the wealth of the nation, the latter has outgrown the possibility of meeting its wants. The price of a seat in parliament amounts almost to a tariff, it is true; the average expense for a term of years being set down as a thousand pounds a-year: but the supply is limited, and is in a few hands. Men may submit to a competition; but, though in the case of representation there must be some fixed numbers, they naturally dislike monopoly, and still more, in such cases, the fruits of monopoly. Were the English government strictly a money-power government, its security would be treble what it is to-day, for it would at once neutralise one of the most formidable of its enemies: but it is not;

---

for, though based on money, it is so modified as not to give even money fair play. Were there not natural political antipathies between the rich and the poor, they would unite, and speedily produce a change.

It would be a master-stroke of policy to bring in all the wealth of the country again, as a loyal ally of the government, by destroying the borough system entirely, equalising representation by numbers, establishing a reasonably high rate of qualification, and, by preserving the open vote, leave money to its influence. I take it, a money-government that is fairly in action, in an industrious and intelligent nation, is only equalled in strength by one based on popular rights, in a community accustomed to the exercise of political privileges: it is, however, the government most likely to corrupt and debase society.

When I tell you of the intelligence of the poor in England, you are to under-



stand me, not as saying that it extends very far; but the cultivation of intellect dependent on the exercise of the mechanical arts, the cheapness of printing, and the general spirit of the age, have raised up a set of men in England, among what are called the operatives, who are keen in investigation, frequently eloquent and powerful in argument, and alive, by position, to those natural rights of which they are now deprived. These men act strongly on the minds of their fellows, and are producing an effect it would be folly to despise. Paine was of the class.

The popular accounts of the fortunes of the landed aristocracy of England may lead you into erroneous notions concerning their relative wealth and power, so far as the two are connected. Conversing lately with one of the best informed men in the kingdom on such a subject, I alluded to the reputed income of Lord Grosvenor,

who is said to have £300,000 a-year. My acquaintance laughed at the exaggeration, telling me that he did not believe there was a man in the country who had half that income; and that he knew but five or six who, he thought, could have as much as £100,000.

These large incomes are also liable to many reductions, even when they do exist. The estate is there, certainly, and the incumbent has a life-interest in it; but what between widows' dowers, younger children, mortgages, and liens created by the anticipations incident to entails, and other charges, one, who is a good judge, tells me he questions if the proprietors of England touch much more than half the amount of their rent-rolls, if indeed they receive as much. My friend is intimate with a man of rank here, — with whom I have also a slight acquaintance, — and speaking of his estate, he added, "Now,

vulgar rumour will tell you Lord —— has a hundred thousand a-year; he has, in truth, a rent-roll of sixty thousand, of which he actually receives about forty."

There is so much beauty in probity, and one feels such a respect for those who manifest more devotedness to the affections than to worldly interests, that I cannot refrain from relating a circumstance or two connected with the history of this nobleman, that were related by his friend in the same conversation.

Lord —— was born a younger son. The improvidence of his father left a debt of the enormous amount of near a million of dollars. The elder brother and heir refused to recognise this claim, which did not form a lien on the estate. A moderate provision had been made for the younger brother. At this period, my friend was commissioned to speak to the latter concerning a marriage with the heir-

ess of a large estate,—not less, I believe, than sixteen thousand a-year. He heard the proposition, coloured, hesitated, and answered, that, if he ever married, his choice was made. Shortly after he married his present wife, who was virtually without fortune. A few years later the elder brother died childless, when he succeeded to the titles and the estates. From that moment his expenditure was so regulated, that in a few years he was enabled to pay every sixpence of the debts of the father, since which time he has lived with the liberal hospitality becoming his station.

I do not know that the English nobility are at all deficient in liberality; but the charity-*fanfaronades* of Christmas blankets, and hogsheads of beer, and warm cloaks, that so often appear in the journals here, have only excited a smile; while I have never seen Lord ——, since I learned these traits, without feeling a reverence for

the man. He has his reward, for his wife is just such a woman as would remove all cause of regret for having acted nobly.

An English gentleman has just published a book on the subject of the exaggerations that prevail concerning the incomes of the gentry of the country. He has adopted a very simple and a very accurate mode to prove his case, which, it strikes me, he has done completely. "Vulgar rumour gives Lord A—— thirty thousand a-year," he says, at starting: "now we all know that the estates of Lord A—— consist of such and such manors in such a county, and of so many more manors," all of which he names, "in some other county." These manors he shows to contain so many acres of land. The rental in each county is pretty well known; and, taking it at two pounds the acre, he calculates that nine thousand acres give but eighteen thousand a-year *gross* income: this diminishes the

---

popular rental nearly one-half. In this manner he goes on to show, in a great many real cases, (mine being supposititious,) how enormously fame has exaggerated the truth in these matters. In estimating the struggle between the wealth that is in possession of power, and that which is excluded by the present political system of England, you are therefore to discard from your mind fully one-half of what is popularly said about the former as sheer exaggeration.

Still the aristocracy of this country is very powerful. It has enlisted in its favour a strong national feeling, a portion of which is well founded, a part of which is fraudulent and even wicked, and some of which is dependent on one of the most abject conditions of the mind to which man is liable. By aristocracy I do not now mean merely the peers and their heirs, but that class which is identified by blood,

intermarriages, possessions, and authority in the government ; for you are never to forget, though the House of Commons does contain a few members who are exceptions, that the controlling majority of that body is, to all intents and purposes, no more than another section of the interests represented by the peers. The two bodies may occasionally disagree, but it is as partners discuss their common concerns, and as the lords frequently disagree among themselves.

The English gentlemen have the merits of courage, manliness, intelligence, and manners.—Their morals are overrated, except as to the vices which are connected with meanness. Perhaps there is less of the latter than is commonly found in countries where the upper classes are more directly under the influence of courts ; but even of this there is much, very much, more than it is common to believe in America. As between the English and ourselves, I

honestly think we have the advantage of them on this point. They are our superiors in manners and in intelligence; they are our superiors in all that manliness which is dependent on opinion; but certainly I have known things practised, and that pretty openly, in connexion with interest, by men of condition here, which could not well be done by a gentleman with us, without losing *caste*.

In the northern states we have very few families whose sons would now hesitate about embarking in commerce; at need; and this, of itself, is a great outlet (as well as inlet) for the vices of a pecuniary nature. The prejudices connected with this one subject are the cause of half the meannesses of Europe. The man who would hesitate about suffering his name to appear in a commercial firm would pass his life in a commission of meannesses, not to say crimes, that should put him to the ban of society.



This feeling is daily becoming weaker in England, but it is still strong. Men of family scarcely ever engage *openly* in commerce, though they often do things *covertly*, which, besides possessing the taint of trade, have not the redeeming merit of even its equivocal ethics. To them the army, navy, church, and government patronage are almost the only resources. The latter facts have given rise to two of the most odious of the practical abuses of the present system. A few occasionally appear at the bar, but more as criminals than as advocates. The profession is admitted within the pale of society, as it opens the way to the peerage and to parliament; but it requires too much labour and talents to be in favour. A physician in England ranks higher, professionally, than almost anywhere else; but he is scarcely considered an equal in the higher set.

The younger sons of peers enter all the

professions but that of medicine, but I never heard of one who chose to be a doctor. A curate may become Archbishop of Canterbury ; but a physician can merely hope to reach a baronetcy, a dignity little coveted. Like our "Honourables," and "Colonels," it is not in vogue with the higher classes. I cannot better illustrate the state of feeling here, in relation to these minor titles, than by our own in relation to the appellations named, which are of much account in certain sets, but which it is thought bad taste to bandy among gentlemen.

The masculine properties of the English aristocracy (I include the gentry, you will remember,) have deservedly given them favour with the nation. They owe something of this to the climate, which is favourable to field-sports ; and something, I think, to the nature of their empire, which has fostered enterprise. Physically they

are neither larger, nor stronger, nor more active than ourselves ; but I think they attend more to manly exercises. The army has been exclusively their property, for it is necessary in such a government to keep it in the hands of those who rule. The purchase of commissions is strictly in unison with the spirit of the system. Then the insulated situation of the kingdom, coupled with its wealth, induce travelling. The influence of the latter can scarcely be overrated, and no nation has so many motives for quitting home.

The English go abroad for the sake of economy, for while their actual expenses are less, their incomes are increased from five to twenty per cent. by the usual courses of exchange. Formerly none but men of rank went abroad, and they were distinguished from the rest of the nation by their taste and liberality ; but now all the genteel classes (and some below them even)

travel. It is true the English character on the Continent has suffered by the change, but the English nation is greatly the gainer.

The English gentlemen are not sparing of their persons in war, or in civil troubles; they would not have abandoned Paris to a mob, in 1792.\* These are qualities to captivate the mass, who greatly prize daring and physical excellences. Although there is a considerable, and certainly an increasing hostility to the exclusive classes of England, there is also a deep feeling of respect and even of attachment for them, in a portion of the nation. Perhaps no aristocracy was ever less enervated or thrown off its guard by the enjoyment of its advantages than this; a fact that must be attributed, too, to the circumstance that the public, by possessing so many more

\* In 1830-31, when England was menaced with revolution, the English travellers on the Continent of Europe hurried back to their own country, to be at their posts.

franchises than usual, have kept them constantly on the alert.

In the event of any struggle between the aristocrats and the mass, I should say that much may be expected from the manliness and spirit of the former; enough, perhaps, aided as these qualities would be by their habits of control and combination, to secure the victory, were it not that the very affluence of intelligence in this portion of the nation would always put at the command of the people sufficient men of minds and authority to direct them. Although a wide reform, wide enough to admit themselves, would be apt to be sustained by the *novi homines*, revolution would not; for the new rich, as a body, are always found on the side opposed to popular rights; and the aristocracy would have most to apprehend from seceders from their own body, as leaders, unless events, as probably would be the case, should raise up

some man of native fitness for the station from the ranks of the people themselves.

That part of the present influence of the aristocracy which is fraudulent and even wicked, is connected with a widespread system of studied misrepresentation, and with abuses connected with the Church. As I shall probably have occasion to write a short letter on the subject of the latter, I will touch on the former alone, at present. While the aristocracy itself is so well-mannered, and less apt to betray illiberal sentiments than the classes beneath it, I cannot think it free from the imputation of having conspired to circulate the atrocious misrepresentations which have been so industriously promulgated against ourselves, for instance, during the last half century. They may despise the traitors, but they love the treason.

The whole code of prejudices and false political maxims which pervade society

here, is the offspring of a system of which they are the head. They have differed from the other nations of Europe, in which power is exclusive, in the circumstance of the franchises of the nation. A franchise is not power of itself, but it is an exemption from the abuses of power. As it was not possible to muzzle the press, it has become necessary to make it the instrument of circulating falsehood. No means of effecting such an end are so certain as that of creating prejudice, which instantly becomes an active and efficient agent in attaining the end. The United States, her system, national character, historical facts, people, habits, manners, and morals, for obvious reasons, have been one principal object for these assaults; but as I may have occasion to speak of the Anglo-American question hereafter, I will now allude only to the internal action of the system.

Thirty-six years ago, you and I were

school-fellows and class-mates in the house of a clergyman of the true English school. This man was an epitome of the national prejudices, and, in some respects, of the national character. He was the son of a beneficed clergyman in England ; had been regularly graduated at Oxford and admitted to orders ; entertained a most profound reverence for the king and the nobility ; was not backward in expressing his contempt for all classes of dissenters and all ungentlemanly sects ; was particularly severe on the immoralities of the French Revolution, and, though eating our bread, was not especially lenient to our own ; compelled you and me to begin Virgil with the Eclogues, and Cicero with the knotty phrase that opens the oration in favour of the poet Archias, "because their writers would not have placed them first in the books if they did not intend people to read them first ;" spent



his money freely, and sometimes that of other people ; was particularly tenacious of the ritual, and of all the decencies of the church ; detested a democrat as he did the devil ; cracked his jokes daily about Mr. Jefferson and Black Sal, never failing to place his libertinism in strong relief against the approved morals of George III, of several passages in whose history it is charity to suppose he was ignorant ; prayed fervently on Sundays ; decried all morals, institutions, churches, manners, and laws but those of England, Mondays and Saturdays ; and, as it subsequently became known, was living every day in the week, *in vinculo matrimonii*, with another man's wife !

You know this sketch to be true. Now, I do not mean to tell you that all the stronger features of this case are at all national ; but I think the prejudices, the pretending condemnation of the moral

defects of those who did not think exactly as he did, and the blindness to his own faults, are. In this particular, that church of which our old master was a member, in doing the state good service, has done itself a grave injury. The popular mind has been so acted on, by a parade of religious influences, that millions of Englishmen attach a sense of criminality to the efforts of those who would reform the government. I think you must have observed how seldom one has found an active English reformer left in possession of a fair moral character. The course has usually been to commence by assailing the liberals with sneers, in connexion with their origin, their pursuits, and their motives. These attacks have been addressed to the abject feeling which the establishment of an aristocracy has formed in the minds of the mass, and which has created a sort of impression that birth and fortune

are necessary to the civic virtues. He who should make it matter of reproach against a public man in France that he came of the people, would lose more than he would gain by his argument ; and yet it is a constant weapon of the English party tactics. Failing of success by these means, the next assault is against the character.

The English themselves are apt to attribute the latter expedient to a creditable feeling in the nation, which invites, by its moral sense, exposures of this nature. The reasoning may be true in part, or it is true up to the level of the dogmas of the decency-and-seemliness school which the system has created ; but it is flagrantly false when viewed on pure Christian principles. Coupled with the grossness of language, the personalities, the vindictiveness, and the obvious deformities of hostility and art with which these attacks are usually made, nothing can be more

inherently offensive to the feelings of those of whom the "chiefest virtue" is charity. But we need no better proof that the whole is the result of a factitious state of things, in which a parade of morals is made to serve an end, than the fact, that while every man who shows a generous mind is peculiarly obnoxious to be accused of vice, they who are notorious for their misdeeds are not only overlooked, but spoken of in terms of reverence, if they happen to belong to the dominant party. You will understand me; I am not now speaking of the common party abuse, which varies with events, but of a deliberate and systematic method of vituperation, by means of which the idea of liberalism in politics has become associated in the public mind with irreligion, libertinism, pecuniary dishonesty, and, in short, with a general want of moral principle. As a consequence, men habitually think

of Mr. A ———, or Sir George B———, or Lord C———, as persons to be condemned for their sins, though the very vices of which they are accused are openly practised by half the favourites and leaders of the other side, with impunity as regards the public. I can quote to you the instance of Washington, who was accused of being an unprincipled adventurer at the commencement of the Revolution, as a case in point; and I dare say your own scrupulous and pious father passed for a fellow no better than he should be, with a majority of the well-intentioned English of that day.

It seems to me that there is a singular conformity between English opinion and the English institutions. The liberty of the country consists in franchises, which secures a certain amount of personal rights, and not in a broad system, which shall insure the control of numbers. As indi-

---

viduals, I am inclined to think the English (meaning those who are easy in their circumstances) do more as they please than any other people on earth ; while the moment they begin to think and act collectively, I know no nation in which the public mind is so much influenced by factitious and arbitrary rules. Something like the very converse of this exists with us.

I have little to say about the influence which the aristocracy possess through the deference of their inferiors. Strange as it may seem, the subordinate classes take a sort of pride in them. Such a feeling can only have arisen from the depression of the less fortunate, and it is quite plain has gathered no small part of its intensity from anything but that knowledge which leaves "no man a hero with his *valet-de-chambre*." It exists to a singular degree, in despite of all the bluster about liberty ; and I can safely say that I never yet knew an Eng-

lishman, I care not of what degree of talents, who did not appreciate the merits of a nobleman, to a certain extent, by his rank, unless he lived in free and constant communion with men of rank himself. I have found the nobles of England, certainly, as I have already told you; but it has often puzzled me to discover the aristocratic mien, the aristocratic ears, aristocratic fingers, aristocratic nails, and aristocratic feet that these people talk and write so much about. I have been often led to think of that *jeu d'esprit* of Hopkinson, where he says

“ The *rebel* vales, the *rebel* dales,  
With *rebel* trees surrounded,  
The distant woods, the hills and floods,  
With *rebel* echoes sounded,”

in reading of these marvels. I need scarcely tell you that an English nobleman is morally much as the highest gentleman of a great and polished empire might be supposed to be, and in physical formation very

like other men. His ears may occasionally be a little more obvious than common, but he possesses no immunity by which they can be made smaller than those of all around him.

I think this feeling of deference, however, is so interwoven with all the habits of thought and reasoning of the nation, that its *prestige* will long confer an advantage on the nobles of England, unless the torrent of change, by being unnaturally and unwisely dammed, gain so much head as to sweep all before it.

There is no great princely nobility in England, like that which exists on the continent of Europe, and which—royal personages in fact curtailed of their power by the events of this and of past ages—is still deemed worthy of forming royal alliances. In blood, modern alliances, and antiquity, the English nobles, as a class, rank among the lowest of Europe; their importance



being owing to the peculiarity of their political connexion with one of the first, if not the very first state of Christendom. I do not know that their private wealth at all surpasses that of the great nobles of the Continent, those of France excepted; although there is no inferior nobility here, as there, the younger sons sinking at once into the class of commoners. When the Howards of the fifteenth century were just emerging from obscurity, the Guzmans, the Radziuils, the Arembergs, and hundreds of other houses were sinking from the rank of princes into that of their present condition. The ancestors of Talleyrand were deprived of their possessions as sovereign counts a century before the first Howard was ennobled.

As to the ancient baronies that figure among the titles of the English, they are derived from a class of men who would have been followers, and not the equals, of

the Guzmans and Perigords, five centuries since. There appear to me to be two errors prevalent on this subject—that of overrating the relative importance and antiquity of the nobility of England, (except when viewed as a political aristocracy, or since the Revolution of 1688,) and that of underrating the true condition of the English gentry. All this is not of much importance, though I was lately told of a German princess who spoke of a marriage with the House of Hanover as a *mésalliance* !

LETTER XIV.

TO RICHARD COOPER, ESQ. COOPERSTOWN,  
N. Y.

Sir Thomas Lawrence.—Mr. Leslie.—Mr. Newton.—  
Dinner at Mr. Rogers's.—The Princess of Wales and  
Sir Walter Scott.—Mr. "Conversation" Sharp.—Eng-  
lish Society.—Mrs. Siddons.—Mrs. Lockhart.—Sir  
Walter and Lady Scott.—Mr. Rogers.

THE last month has been one of severe  
duty with the knife and fork. Through  
the hospitality and kindness of Mr. Rogers  
I have dined no less than three times with  
him alone.

On the first occasion, our party consisted  
of Lords Lansdown, Grey, and Gower,\*

\* The present Duke of Sutherland.

---

Sir Thomas Lawrence, Mr. Luttrell, and myself. I have little to tell you of this dinner, which was like any other. I thought some of the company stood too much in awe of the great man, though I did not see why, for there is no one here with whom I feel less restraint, myself, than with Lord Grey. Of course one defers naturally to a man of his years and reputation, but, beyond this, I found nothing to check conversation.

The painter is a handsome, well-behaved man, though he was not at his ease. In the course of the evening he inquired if I knew Gilbert Stewart. He had a slight acquaintance with him, and wished to know if "he were not a very facetious gentleman." I was of opinion that Stewart invented to amuse his sitters. This, Sir Thomas then observed, explained a report he had heard, according to which Mr. Stewart had claimed him as one of

---

his pupils ; an honour I thought he rather pointedly disavowed. Our artist does not appear to be much known here. It is the fashion to decry Mr. West now, quite as much as it was to overrate him while the island, by the war, was hermetically sealed against Continental art.

We constantly run into the extreme of over-estimating the celebrity of our own people in this part of the world. So far as my experience goes, Washington and Franklin are the only two Americans who enjoy thoroughly European reputations. I mean by this, that, were their names mentioned in a drawing-room, every one would know who they were, their peculiar merits, and the leading points in their histories. Jefferson would, I think, come next ; after which, the knowledge of individuals would be confined chiefly to the respective professions.

There are men who live by writing for

the periodicals, and such is the craving for novelty, that they lay heaven and earth under contribution for subjects. In this way, an article occasionally appears that treats of American things and American names, and, in the simplicity of our hearts, we fancy the world is meditating on our growing greatness, when, in fact, the periodicals themselves scarcely attract attention. Indeed, one of the things that has struck me favourably here, is the practice which people have of doing their own thinking. Puffs and advertisements may help a work off; but they do not, as with us, bestow reputation. Nothing is more common than to hear opinions of books and pictures, but I do not remember ever to have heard a remark concerning the notions of the reviewers. Reviews may control the inferior classes, but they have little or no effect on the higher. Intelligence, breeding, tone, taste, and manners,

rally in such masses in these huge capitals, that they not only make head against the inroads of vulgarity and ignorance, but they even send forth a halo that sheds a little light out of their own proper sphere ; whereas, with us, like treasures exposed to invasion, they are in constant risk from an incursion of the barbarians, who sometimes fairly get them in their clutches.

Mr. Alston is less known than I had supposed, though where known he seems to be appreciated. I should say Mr. Leslie is more in possession of the public here, than any other American artist, though scarcely known out of England ; for a painting has not ubiquity, like a book. Mr. Newton's reputation is limited. We boast too much of these gentlemen ; not on account of their merits, for each has great merits in his way ; but because I think neither is particularly anxious to meet our prurient attachment. Mr. Leslie

is a mild man, and cares little, apparently, for anything but his tastes and his affections; the latter of which do not turn exclusively to America. He was born in London, and has told me that his first recollections are of England. Mr. Newton has quite pointedly given me to understand that he too was born a British subject, and that he thinks himself an Englishman.

If any man is excusable for deserting his country, it is the American artist. His studies require it, even; and there is little to gratify his tastes at home. As respects these two gentlemen, the accidents of birth are in unison with the accidents of their profession; and it really seems to me we should show more self-respect by permitting them to choose their own national characters.

At the second dinner we had ladies, the sister of the poet presiding. We were



kept waiting a good while for two or three gentlemen who were in the House of Lords, where it seems an interesting debate occurred on a party question; but we sate down without them. We had at table, Mr. Thomas Grenville; Lord Ashburnham, who, when asked the question, confessed he had not been in the House, except to take the oaths, in seventeen years; and Lady Aberdeen, the wife of the minister. Lady —— was also of our party. The absentees left large gaps at the board, and our dinner was *tant soit peu* dull.

In the course of the evening, Mr. Grenville related a very amusing anecdote of Scott. They dined in company with the Princess of Wales, while she was in her equivocal exile at Blackheath. After dinner, the party was grouped around the chair of the Princess, when the latter said abruptly, "They tell me, Mr. Scott, you relate the prettiest Scotch stories in the

world ; do have the goodness to relate me one." This was making a little of a mountebank of the great bard, to be sure ; but his deference for royal rank was so great that he merely bowed, and said, " Yes, madam," and began—" In the reign of king such-a-one, there lived in the highlands of Scotland such a laird," going on with his legend, as if he were reading it from a book. The story was short, neatly told, and produced a good effect. " Dear me ! Mr. Scott, what a clever story !" exclaimed the Princess, who, if all they say about lineage and blood be true, must have been a changeling ; " pray be so obliging as to tell me another ?"—" Yes, madam !" said Scott ; and without a moment's hesitation he went on with another, as a schoolboy would go through with his task !

Mr. Grenville asked me if John Jay was still alive. On hearing that he was, he spoke of him in high terms, as a man of

abilities and sterling integrity. I should say Mr. Jay has left a better name in England than any diplomatic man we ever had here. In general, I think the disposition is to "damn us with faint praise;" but the respect of Mr. Grenville seemed sincere and cordial. Dr. Franklin is not a favourite in London; more than one of the prominent men among the English statesmen speaking of him, in my presence, in anything but terms of admiration.

It is not a safe rule to take the opinion of England concerning any American in public life, for it is very often "*tant mieux, tant pis*," with them; but there is a sturdy honesty in the better part of this nation that gives a value to their judgments in all matters of personal integrity and fair standing.

After dinner our peers came in full of their debate, and as merry as boys. Lord

Holland was one of them, and he was quite animated with what had passed. It seems my bishop had made a speech, which they pronounced rather illogical.

Sir Walter Scott soon after joined us. Although so complaisant to a princess, he showed he had stuff in him to-night. There was a woman of quality present, who is a little apt to be *exigeante*, and who, I dare say, on a favourable occasion, might ask for three stories. No sooner did the great poet appear in the door, than, although in a remote part of the room, she addressed him in a decided voice, asking him how he did, and expressing *her* delight at seeing him. The old man took it all like Ben-Nevis, walking up coolly to Miss Rogers and paying his respects, (a tribute to good manners that scarcely silenced the other,) before he made the least reply. This was done with the steadiness, quiet, and tact of Lafayette—certainly one

of the best bred men of the age. Scott seems much more at his ease in London than he did in Paris, where the romance and the *empressement* of the women had the effect of embarrassing him a little.

The third of Mr. Rogers's dinners was given expressly to Sir Walter Scott, I believe. We had at table Sir Walter himself, Mr. Lockhart, Mrs. Lockhart, and Miss Anne Scott; Mr. Chantrey, Lord John Russell, and Mr. Sharp, a gentleman who is called "Conversation Sharp," Sir James Mackintosh, and a Mr. Jekyll, who, I was told, from his intimacy with George the Fourth, and his wit, has obtained the name of the "king's jester." Mr. Leslie came in before we left the table, and in the drawing-room we had Mrs. Siddons and several more ladies.

There is something too gladiatorial about such dinners to render them easy or entertaining. As a homage to Scott it was

well enough, but it wanted the *abandon* necessary to true enjoyment. No one talked freely; even Mr. Sharp, who has obtained so much reputation for ability in that way, making one or two ineffectual rallies to set us in motion. I have met this gentleman frequently, and, though a sensible and an amiable man, I have been a good deal at a loss to imagine how he got his appellation. In comparison with that of Sir James Mackintosh, his conversation is gossip. I do not mean by this, however, that Mr. Sharp indulges in trivial subjects; but it strikes me he has neither reach of mind, information, originality, wit, nor command of language, to give him reputation in a town like London, and yet he is everywhere called “ Conversation Sharp.” In short, if I had not been told that such was his *sobriquet*, I should have said he was a sensible, amiable, well-read person, of social habits, and who talked

neither particularly well, nor yet so ill as to attract attention, and just about as much as a man of his age ought to talk. He seems rather more disposed than usual to break the stiff silence that sometimes renders an English party awkward, and may have become distinguished in that way; for the man who will put Englishmen at ease in company, meaning Englishmen of a certain class, merits an illustration. Before this dinner, however, I have never observed so much of this social awe in the better company here. A caste or two lower in the scale, it becomes characteristic of the national manners, always excluding, of course, those who are so low as to be natural. I think the people of England are more hearty, cordial, and free in their modes of intercourse, than the people of America, though certainly less parochial; the application of which term I shall leave you to discover for yourself.

Mr. Jekyll has a reputation for chaste wit. To-day he was not distinguished in this respect, though I observed that the company occasionally smiled at his remarks, as if they associated cleverness with his conversation. In this particular I question if there is a man in London, above the level of story-tellers and jokers, who is the equal of Mr. W——.

It strikes me the English are drilled into a formality that throws a cloud over their social intercourse. As a people they are not fluent, and the itching desire to catch the tone of the highest class has probably a bad effect; for a man may be a peer, or a great commoner, without being much gifted with intellect. It is true that Englishmen of this class are generally respectable, but mere respectability of mind will not suffice for great models; and when a body of merely respectable men impart a tone to others, which origi-



nates in their own incapacity, it has the effect to restrain talents. Individuals like Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Coleridge overcome this by the force of their impulses, and the consciousness of power; but thousands of men, highly, though less gifted than they, are curbed by the established forms. This is but speculation after all, and quite likely it is valueless.

I have told you Mrs. Siddons and several other ladies joined us in the evening. Mr. Rogers presented me to the former, but her reception was cold and distant. Drawn out, as I had been, especially for this introduction, I could not withdraw abruptly without saying something; and I remarked that our papers, perhaps idly, had been flattering the Americans that she was about to visit the country. She answered, that if she were twenty years younger, she might be glad to do so, but her age now put such a thing quite out of

the question. Her air was too much on stilts, I thought ; and, though I dare say it is her natural manner, it reminded me unpleasantly of the heroine. Her voice seemed pitched to the stately keys of a tragic queen, and her enunciation was slightly pedantic. I should say, for the drawing-room, her tone, as relates to these peculiarities, was decidedly professional and bad.

I may tell you many things of this nature that will be opposed to your previous impressions ; but the sources of information whence the portraits of the periodical literature of the day are drawn, are to be distrusted. There is one distinguished English writer in particular, of whom it is the fashion to celebrate, in constant eulogies, the grace and deportment, who, I shall say, is one of the very worst-mannered persons I have ever met in cultivated society. Flattery and malice,

sustained, as both are, by the credulity and compliance of mankind, make sad work with the truth.\*

Mr. Lockhart did me the favour to present me to his wife, who is a daughter of Sir Walter Scott. She is eminently what the French call *gracieuse*, and just the woman to have success at Paris by her sweet simple manners, sustained by the great name of her father. I thought her quick of intellect and reflective of humour. Scott himself was silent and quiet the whole day, though he had a good stately chat with Mrs. Siddons, who *dialogued* with him in a very Shaksperian manner.

\* In speaking of personal peculiarities, the writer thinks he has had sufficient care not to wound the parties. His knowledge of Mrs. Siddons does not extend farther than an evening's observation of her mere exterior; but she is removed beyond the reach of his opinion, did it apply to things more essential. Of the persons collected around the table of Mr. Rogers on the day in question, Sir Walter Scott, Miss Scott, Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Sharp, and Mr. Jekyll, are also already dead.

The next day, in the morning, I had a visit from Sir Walter, to apologise for not keeping an engagement he had made to go with Mr. Rogers and myself to Hampton Court, where his son Major Scott is just now quartered. In the conversation in which this engagement was made, I happened to mention something connected with my consulate, when Sir Walter inquired, with a little interest, if I were the consul of America at Lyons. I told him I was so in commission and name, though I had never been in the place. "Ah!" observed Mr. Rogers, with a pithy manner he knows how to assume—"it is a *job*." To this I answered, it was a bad job then, as it returned neither honour nor profit. Sir Walter had listened attentively to this trifling, and he now came to speak further on the subject, as well as to make his apologies.

The late Lady Scott was the daughter of

a native of Lyons, it seems ; her maiden name having been Charpentier, or, *Anglicè*, Carpenter. Some person of the family, as I understood Sir Walter, had gone to the East Indies, where he had accumulated a considerable fortune, and it now became important to his children to establish the affinity ; in order to do which, the first step was to get extracts from the local registers, of the birth of M. Charpentier. He brought with him a note of what he required, and I promised to send it to the consular agent immediately, for investigation. In this note he described M. Charpentier as a *maître d'armes*, or fencing-master, a sort of occupation that would just suit his own notions of chivalry.

The excuse for postponing the party to Hampton Court, was a summons from the King to dine at Windsor ; a command of this sort ~~superceded~~ <sup>superseding</sup> all other engagements.

He kindly begged me to name another day for the excursion, but, between bad health and business, it was not in my power to do so. Your aunt, too, who was completely excluded from society by her mourning, and who was now in London for the first time, had too just a claim on my time, to be set aside for other persons. She wished to go to Windsor and Richmond, and into Hertfordshire ; and these considerations compelled me to forego the rare pleasure of making a third in a party composed of Walter Scott and Samuel Rogers.

I have just missed seeing Mr. Wadsworth too, in consequence of ill-health. He dined with Mr. Rogers, and I was asked to meet him ; but my old enemy the headache, and a severe nervous attack, obliged me to send excuses, though I put them off as long as I could, and drank hot tea all the morning to get myself in trim.

Mr. Rogers sent to press me to join them in the evening, but I was then in bed. As country air will now be useful, we have determined to go to Windsor at once.

## LETTER XV.

TO RICHARD COOPER, ESQ., COOPERSTOWN, N.Y.

Vicinity of London.—English Landscapes.—Parks.—Richmond Hill.—Twickenham.—Strawberry Hill.—Windsor Castle.—St. George's Chapel.

WHATEVER may be said of the beauty of the country in England in particular parts, it scarcely merits its reputation as a whole. I have seen no portion of it that is positively ugly, a heath or two excepted; and yet I have seen more that is below mediocrity than above it. I am told, however, I have not seen its finest portions. There is certainly little to admire, in the way of landscape, immediately in the vicinity of London, so far as I have



become acquainted with its environs, and we have now entered and left the town in nearly every direction.

Taking our own village as a centre, and describing a circle with a radius of fifty miles, I greatly question if all England could supply the same field of natural beauty. Our landscapes have much the effect of English park scenery too, aided by the isolated and graceful woods that belong to every farm, and the negligent accidents of clearing, of which the celebrated art of landscape gardening is merely an imitation. But this country has a great advantage, both in its higher finish and in its numerous and interesting artificial accessories. It is only when viewed at the distance of a mile or two, that the scenery of our country, for instance, has the park-like character at all; the foreground of the picture commonly wanting the necessary polish. Still I can recall a portion of

the road between Cooperstown and Utica, that comes almost up to the level of what would be thought fine rural scenery even in England; surpassing it in outline and foliage, and perhaps falling as much short of it by the want of country-houses and picturesque dwellings, bridges, churches, and other similar objects. I mention these places, because they are familiar to you, and not because the country has no more; for I think it may be taken as a rule, that the frequency and negligent appearance of our woods bring the American landscapes, seen in the distance, much nearer to the level of the English, than is commonly believed.

There is a limit which associates with the ordinary English rural scene the idea of comfort and snugness, that is in marked contrast to the naked, comfortless aspect of the broad, unrelieved fields of France. This feature makes the great distinction

---

between the landscapes of the two countries. The nature of the Continent appears to have been cast in a larger mould than that of this island ; and when, to this circumstance, you add the fact of the enclosures by means of hedges on the one side, and their total absence on the other, you may form a tolerable idea of the different characters of the scenery of the two countries.

I am led out of London, and tempted to these remarks, in consequence of our having profited by the fine weather to make several excursions into the country ; after all of which I am half-inclined to say that the town itself possesses in its very bosom finer rural beauties than are to be met anywhere in its neighbourhood. I have great pleasure, as the season advances, in studying the varying aspects of the parks, which, at moments, present singularly beautiful glimpses. The *chiaro scuro* of these pic-

tures is not remarkable, it is true; the darks predominating rather too much. This is a bold criticism, considering that Nature is the artist; but what I mean is, that the play of light and shade is not as sweet or as soft as in milder climates. Still it is more poetical than that of a fierce sun, unrelieved by vapour.

The groupings in the parks contribute largely to their beauty. The mixture of cows and of deer grazing, with children at their sports, horsemen dashing across the view, and stately coaches rolling along the even and winding roads, add the charm of a moving panorama to the beauties of verdure, trees, flowers, paths, and water. I do not, now, allude to the Sunday exhibitions; for they are cockney, and rather mar the scene; but to the more regular life of the week. You can hardly imagine the beauty of two or three scarlet coats passing athwart the broad beds of verdure,

I have seen battalions parading, but the formalities of lines rather injure than help the effect; though half-a-dozen soldiers, scattered about the grass, are like so many fine touches of light in a good picture.

One of our first excursions was to Richmond Hill. We were disappointed in the view, which owes its reputation more to the vicinity of a great town, I suspect, than to its intrinsic merits. The best of a capital is pretty certain to get a name by the mere force of tongues; and the English have a failing in common with ourselves, which may be attributed to the same cause,—an insulated position. This precious circumstance is quite certain to breed cockneys: the failing is, that of thinking their own best,—better than every one else's best. Travelling, however, is making great innovations on this patriotic vice; and Richmond, I think, is losing its parish fame.

The terrace of Richmond overlooks an exquisite bit of foreground, however, in which the Thames makes an admirable sweep; but the nearly boundless background is crowded, confused, and totally without relief. When Mr. Mathews, the comedian, was in America, I took him to the belfry of the Capitol at Albany, that he might get an accurate notion of the localities. He stood gazing at the view a minute, and then exclaimed, "I don't know why they make so much fuss about Richmond: now, to my notion, this is far better than Richmond Hill." Mr. Mathews did not recollect that they who *do* make the fuss, scarcely ever saw any other hill.

We were told the view was better from an upper window in the inn, than from the terrace; but I cannot think fifteen or twenty feet in elevation can make any decided difference in this respect. We went into the park, but were not particularly struck

by it. There was a large herd of deer, or I ought to say a drove, for they had a calm and *sheepish* appearance. It is an animal that loses its characteristic charm in losing its sensitive, listening, bounding wildness, and its elasticity.

We passed Kew and Twickenham, varying the road a little in order to do both. The palace at the former place is to come down, being an old German-looking house, that, as a palace, is unworthy of the kingdom, and which has not sufficient historical interest to preserve it. The gardens are valuable for their botanical treasures.

Twickenham is an irregular old village along the banks of the Thames, whose beauties form its charms. We saw the exterior of the house of Pope, which is very much such a dwelling as would belong to a man of moderate means and habits in America. Strawberry Hill was

our object here, however, but we were denied admission. The road, which is narrow and winding, like a lane,—a beauty in itself,—runs close to the building, but a high wall protects the grounds. In arrangements of this sort, the English, or rather the Europeans, much excel us. To the great houses there is space, but they understand the means of obtaining privacy and rural quiet in situations that we should abandon in despair, on account of their publicity. Indeed, few men with us would consent to “hide their light under a bushel,” by building a plain rear on the road, shutting in their grounds by walls, and reserving their elegance for themselves and their friends. I am not quite sure the public would not treat a man’s turning his back on it in this manner as an affront, and take its revenge in biting *his* back in return. Such, notwithstanding, is the situation of Straw-



berry Hill, little being visible from the road it touches but a rear that has no particular merit.

We were much disappointed with the house, seen as we saw it; for it appeared to me to be composed of lath and stucco, in part at least. It is a tiny castle, and altogether it struck me as a sort of architectural toy. And yet the English, who understand these matters well, speak of it with respect, though there is no people with whom "a saint in crape, is twice a saint in lawn," more than with these grave islanders; and it may be possible they see the wit of Horace Walpole, where I saw nothing but his folly. Lady —, who has so good a house of her own, assures me the interior is quite a jewel, and the grounds, to use an Anglicism, delicious; and that she is in the habit of making a pilgrimage to the place twice a year. I'll engage she don't walk on peas to do it.

We took another day to go to Windsor, which is twenty miles from town. Here the Thames is scarcely larger than the Susquehannah at Cooperstown, flowing quite near the castle. The town is neat but irregular, and as unlike Versailles as England is unlike France. This is a snug, compact, beef-and-beer sort of a place, in which one might enjoy a sea-coal fire and a warm dinner while waiting for a stage-coach ; the other awakens the recollections of Burgundy and made dishes, and of polite life. One may expect a royal *cortège* to come sweeping down the stately avenues of Versailles at any moment, whereas the appearance of style in the streets of Windsor excites a sense of unfitness. One leaves an impression of a monarch who deems a kingdom erected for his use, who forces nature and triumphs over difficulties to attain the magnificent ; the other, of the head of a state, profiting by accident to obtain an

abode in which his comforts are blended with a long chain of historical images.

The English say that Windsor is the only real palace in the country, and yet it struck me as scarcely being a palace at all. We were disappointed with its appearance at a distance, and almost as much with its appearance within. Like most old castles, it is an irregular collection of buildings erected on the edge of a declivity, so as to enclose different wards, or courts. I believe, including its terraces, it embraces twelve acres. The Tuileries and Louvre, together, must embrace forty. I should think the buildings of Versailles, without reference to the courts, cover more ground than are included within the walls of Windsor, and, with reference to the courts, twice or thrice as much. A comparison between Vincennes and Windsor would be more true than one between the latter and Versailles, after allowing for the fact that Windsor

is still a royal residence. The round tower of Windsor, or its ancient keep, will not sustain a comparison with the *donjon* of Vincennes; while the chapel and royal apartments of the latter will not compare with those of the former.

Windsor is a picturesque and quaint, rather than a magnificent place. It has a character of progressive power and civilization, which leads the mind to the associations of history, and which imparts to it an interest greater than that of mere grandeur, perhaps; but it has little pretension to be considered, on the score of taste and splendour, the principal residence of one of the greatest monarchs of the age,—great in connexion with the power of the nation, if not in connexion with his own. It would be an admirable accessory to the state of a king; venerable by time, and eloquent by association: but it is defective as a principal. While it has great dis-

---

crepancies as a structure, there was a poetical imagery about it that insensibly led me to see a resemblance between it and the history and institutions of the country ; for, like them, it was the pretension of a palace reared on a foundation of feudal usages, aristocratical rather than royal in details, and among which the Church has managed to thrust itself with great advantage, for the chapel, in magnificence and extent, is, out of all proportion, the finest and most important part of the edifices.

I have given you this comparative summary, because minute accounts of this venerable castle abound, and because these accounts do not leave accurate notions of the respective merits of things, without details that are fatiguing, and which are understood only by the initiated. Still Windsor has parts that merit particular mention, and which are peculiar to itself as a royal residence. The first of these is

its situation, which may be classed among the most beautiful known. The view struck me as far finer than that from Richmond Hill, though not as extensive. It is not the site that would be apt to be selected for a palace; but, as you can easily understand, when you remember that the Conqueror first established a hold at the place, it has rather the features of boldness and abruptness that belong to a fortress. These have been softened by modern improvements, and a good terrace now lines the brow of the hill on three of its faces.

The entrance is on the side of the town; and Windsor, like Strawberry Hill, turns its worst side to the public. The approach is abrupt and somewhat rude, but not without gothic grandeur. When within the gate, one is in an irregular court, of no great beauty, though large, but which contains the chapel, the pride of Windsor.

The courts are not on the same level, the natural formation of the hill still existing, one lying a little above another.

We were shown through the state apartments, which greatly disappointed us, being altogether inferior to those of almost every French palace I have entered. There were a few rooms of a good size, but they all had a cold German air; and their ornaments, in general, were clumsy and in bad taste. In nothing is the superiority of the French taste more apparent than in their upholstery, and in their manner of fitting up apartments; and nowhere is this superiority more obvious than in comparing St. Cloud with Windsor. At the latter we had some ponderous magnificence, it is true, which exhibited itself in such vulgarisms as silver andirons and other puerilities; but of graceful and classic taste, there was surprisingly little. Even the

hues of things were generally cold and chilling.

The castle is now undergoing very costly and extensive repairs, however; and as George the Fourth is allowed to have taste, if he has nothing else, and he is openly accused of having sent to Paris for furniture, it is probable that this description of Windsor will soon become untrue. We saw a few of the improvements, which promise well: and one room in particular, a hall in which the Knights of the Garter hold their banquets, bids fair to be one of the finest things in its way in Christendom. It is to be fitted up in a gothic taste, to correspond with the old style of the architecture, and seemingly in unison with the original design. In its present condition, I could not tell how far it had been changed.

The general impression of the state



apartments, as I have just mentioned, was not favourable. They had a stiffness and a poverty of grace, if one can use such a term, that was obvious from the first. There were some fine pictures, and many that were indifferent. Sir Peter Lely flourishes here; and the state bedchamber of the Queen, for a lady as exemplary as Charlotte of Mecklenburgh, contains a droll collection of female worthies by that Corydon of artists. Among them were Mrs. Middleton, Lady Denham, and the Duchess of Cleveland! The Misers of Quintin Matsys are here. But you can get better descriptions of paintings from the regular books, than my limits or my knowledge can help you to.

The chapel is a noble structure. It is as old as the reign of Edward the Fourth, and it has a nave worthy of a cathedral, with a superb window. The roof is of stone, supported by ribs and groins of beau-

tiful proportions. This chapel is called St. George's, and it is appropriated to the religious ceremonies of the Garter. The knights are installed in the choir, which contains the banners, stalls, and arms of the present members of the order; as Henry the Seventh's chapel in Westminster contains those of the members of the order of the Bath.

The emblems of the Garter, like those of the Golden Fleece, carry the mind back to the days of chivalry, and to scenes of historical interest; but they awakened in me no feelings of respect, like those of the Bath. Personal rank is almost an indispensable requisite to belong to the order; and this, with personal or ministerial interest, generally suffices. The names of the sovereigns of Austria, Spain, Denmark, France, Prussia, and the Netherlands, were over as many stalls: there were also those of the Dukes of Dorset, Newcastle, Mont-

rose, Beaufort, Rutland, Northumberland, and Wellington. With the exception of the last, did you ever hear of these knights?

There are many monuments in this chapel; one of which, to the Princess Charlotte, is remarkable for the design, and, I think, imposing, though it is not a favourite. West appears here also in a new character, having sketched the designs for some of the windows.

Eton College stands under the hill, beneath the castle, and on the margin of the river: it is a venerable and quaint pile, and I confess it interested me quite as much as its more celebrated neighbour. It was not a bad thought in Henry to establish a seminary like this, for the early education of the youth of his kingdom, as it were within the shadow of his throne. At Windsor the king is everything, and boys that imbibe their earliest impressions in such an atmosphere will be apt to feel

a lasting reverence for monarchy. But none of the English schools, I believe, can be reproached with disloyalty, for the English cultivate a reverence for the throne that would seem to be pretty accurately proportioned to their systematic intention to allow no one fairly to fill it : they honour the king, and feed him, very much as the Egyptians treated their Apis. After all, is there no analogy between the various mystifications of different and remote nations ?

There are said to be near five hundred oppidans, or boys who pay for their instruction in the school, and near a hundred on the foundation.

We strolled in the Long Walk, which is an avenue lined by trees a league in length. This is royal in extent, but it is scarcely in keeping with the rest of the establishment. The park, I believe, is very extensive, and I presume beautiful ; but we had not time

to enter it. After taking a light repast, we returned to London by a road different from that by which we had come.

We left Windsor, much disappointed in many respects, and highly gratified in others. I had figured to myself a castle that should possess the usual finish which belongs to the English structures of this nature, while it was as much larger and nobler as a king is thought to be greater than a peer, and which was seated in the midst of such gardens and parks as I have been accustomed to see appropriated to royalty elsewhere. Instead of this, the edifices occupied by the family were scarcely better than a first-rate Paris hotel, if indeed any better. In the place of grandeur and state, however, we found quaintness and historical interest; and some of the most lovely rural scenery imaginable, brought close to the walls, to supply the places of a broad park and formal alleys.

Windsor Great Park is detached from the castle, and, as a part of the scene, it belongs as much to any one else as to the king. In short, Windsor struck me as being a noble feudal residence; in this sense relatively royal, but scarcely as magnificent and regal as a palace.

We passed some very pretty houses on our way back to London. They were not generally larger than our own better sort of country residences; but had fewer incongruities, a better disposition of the grounds, and everything was much better kept. One in particular attracted our attention by its shrubbery and wood. A small lawn resembled velvet; and a stream from the setting sun bathed half of it in light, leaving the rest in shadow, producing an effect like the glow of a well-toned painting. It was the noblest colouring I had seen in England.

## LETTER XVI.

TO MRS. COMSTOCK, COMSTOCK, MICHIGAN.

Dancing.—Englishwomen.—Balls.—Exclusive Society.—American Toad-eaters.—A subtle distinction of Character.—Sir James Scarlett.—Ludicrous Mistake.—Visit to a Merchant.—Honourables and Right Honourables.—English Dancing.—A Young American Girl.—Visit to a Patrician.—English Girls.—Unfeminine Manners.—English Ladies and Gentlemen.

ALTHOUGH Paris has so much greater reputation for skill in the art, the English certainly do know how to dance, whatever rumour on your side of the Atlantic may say to the contrary. I remember the sensation made in New York by the circumstance of the wife of an officer of some rank in the British service not knowing how to join in the quadrilles, or cotillions

rather, as far back as the year 1815. This lady, who, by the way, was a distant relative of your own, had been cooped up in the island of Great Britain for twenty years by the war ; and either through sheer patriotism, or because London and Paris then lay so far asunder, her knowledge in the mysteries of Terpsichore did not extend beyond the minuet and the country dance, although, unlike most of those who then came among us from Europe, she was of gentle blood herself, and her husband was the son of a lord. When this lady made her first appearance at a New York ball, to adopt a form of expression a good deal in vogue here, and which it is quite fair to use in the way of retaliation, she had been just *caught*, so far at least as dancing was concerned.

Times are altered, and although I will not even now take it upon me to affirm that the Englishwomen are as graceful



or as sylph-like in a ball-room as our own, they contrive, however, by the aid of their sweet faces, to render their quadrilles very attractive. Since the *pêle mêle* of society has put an end to the public entertainments of our own large towns, we labour under the disadvantage of being obliged to use rooms so small that there is little space for graceful motion ; an evil that is fast undermining our renown in this particular, by introducing a slovenly and careless movement. You must look to it, or the English will come to be your equals in this accomplishment.

I have been led into these profound reflections, in consequence of having made my own appearance at some eight or ten of the balls of London ; not, however, as an actor, but in the more sober character of an observer. It is my intention to endeavour to enliven your solitude near the setting sun, by rendering some account of

---

what I have seen. My first appearance at a premeditated evening party did not happen to be at a ball, but at one of the receptions of a bachelor, who, in virtue of his great wealth, high rank, spacious house, and, for anything I can say to the contrary, personal qualities, is, I believe, quite generally admitted to collect the very social *élite* of London. As there have been some very silly tales told among our friends in reference to my introduction to this gentleman,—or rather to his house, for to *him* I never spoke,—you will pardon a few personal details, if I tell you the truth, by way of preface.

You are to know that, under the English system of exclusion, and owing to the silliness of man, to say nothing of the certain quality in the ladies, heaven and earth are sometimes moved in order to obtain access to particular houses. As it may be well to understand each other on the sub-

---

ject of terms, let me explain what is meant here by exclusion. English exclusion is a wheel within a wheel ;—it is a capricious and arbitrary selection independently often of rank, fortune, birth, accomplishments, learning, or anything else beyond mere fashion. It probably can no more be accounted for than the dog, who did not eat hay himself, nor could give a substantial reason why he refused to let the ox have it. It is a sheer and natural consequence of the wantonness that is engendered by extreme luxury and a highly factitious state of things.

We make a great mistake in America, in this matter, by blending the selection of society that are connected with education, similarity of habits and modes of living, unison of opinions, tastes, and breeding, with the arbitrary exclusion that is founded on nothing better than the whim I have just mentioned. One is natural, the other

forced : one is necessary to the well ordering of society, and to the preservation of manners and tastes ; the other is an effort to supplant the useful by the capricious : one is indispensable to all that is respectable in the sense connected with station, and is the only means by which grace can be cultivated, or refinement produced ; while the other is inherently and irretrievably vulgar.

Wherever civilization exists, society will be separated by *castes* ; for it is not desirable to reduce all to the same level of deportment, tastes, and intelligence, nor possible without making a sacrifice of that which is most estimable. All that liberty assures us, is an entire equality of rights ; and there would be little of this in a community in which the cultivated and elegant were compelled to sacrifice their feelings by an unlimited association with the ignorant and coarse. The common sense of

mankind, everywhere, silently admits this ; and they who cry out loudest against it, are men who usually are unyielding to those beneath them, and declaimers for social equality only as respects their betters. They do not understand the reasons of their own exclusion, for they cannot comprehend points of breeding they have never been taught, tastes they have never cultivated, language they have never heard, and sentiments they have never felt. Happily these social divisions are inevitable ; but the extreme exclusion of the English is a diseased excrescence,—a sort of proud flesh that has shot up in a moral atmosphere, in which these natural causes have been stimulated into unnatural action by the uncalled for aid of artificial stimulants and calculated adjuncts.

I cannot tell you *why* the house of the Duke of —— is considered the very centre of exclusion, in the sense last named,

---

at London ; but I believe such to be the fact. After a few general admissions in favour of colour, texture, and workmanship, one would be puzzled to say why your sex decided on the fashion of the hat at the last exhibition of *Longs Champs*. The Duke of —— is neither the oldest, the richest, the handsomest, the youngest, nor yet the most illustrious man in London, by a great many ; and still, in a sense connected with extreme *haut ton*, he is, perhaps, the one most in request. He is the most *fashionable*, and that, until the *mode* shall be changed, is all that is necessary to establish, to make out my case. Mr. —— mentioned, in conversation, that the master of this enviable establishment had expressed a desire that he would invite me to be among the guests on his next evening. “ He would have sent his card, but I told him you would not stand on the ceremony,” added my friend. It is

always so much better that one should conform to the usages that custom and delicacy prescribe, and this the more especially when circumstances may render others doubtful of their reception, that I thought he had much better not have told him any such thing. A card would have removed every obstacle, and, as I was on easy terms with the negotiator, I believe I laughingly intimated as much. All that was said on the occasion was said in three minutes, and amounted to a delivery of the request, the explanation I have mentioned, and my laughing comment.

The next day I dined with two Americans, both of whom have long been resident here; and the conversation happening to turn on visits, I inquired whether there was any exemption in the case of a peer, about making the first visit in England, or, in short, whether our own usage, or that of the Continent, prevailed. I then

mentioned the equivocal sort of invitation I had to —— House. They both assured me I had not received the proper attention, and that I was not bound to notice it, any further than had been done, by a simple acknowledgment of the civility of the messenger. One might go, or not, on such an invitation. In Paris it would have been my duty to leave a card in such a case, and, on its being returned, I might have gone with propriety. Under the circumstances, I determined to let things take their course; or, if Mr. —— said anything more about it, to go on his account; if not, to stay away on my own. When the evening arrived, however, Sir James Mackintosh very kindly sent a note, to say *he* would be my companion, and I had nothing to do but to express my acknowledgments and readiness to accompany him; for while I cared very little about —— House and exclusion, I did



care a good deal about receiving such an attention from Sir James Mackintosh.

I have said more concerning this silly affair than it deserves ; but, having related the simple facts, it may be well not to throw away the moral. So much deference is paid here to rank, the cravings of the untitled to be noticed by the titled are so strong, and America is deemed so little worthy of taking place with anything, that I am not surprised the truth even, in this case, should excite comment among the English. But what are we to say and think of our own manly and “ much-beloved country,” which, instead of supporting one of its citizens in maintaining what was due not only to himself, but to his nation, helps to confirm its present unseemly position, by decrying what would have been no more than an act of gentlemanly propriety and dignity, had it occurred, and which, never having occurred

at all, lends itself to the circulation of the falsehoods, that the malignant feelings of a set, in which even the name of America is hated, have seen proper to set in motion!

The American who comes to this country, and, forgetful of self-respect, of national pride, of the usages of society even, becomes the toad-eater of the great, is represented as a gentleman, as a man of sentiment, and of delicate feelings! The crumbs of flattery that are thrown out to him, to lead him on, and render him ridiculous, that the people to whom he belongs may be held up to ridicule through him, are reported at home with high-sounding exaggerations in his favour; while he who would simply maintain that an American gentleman is entitled to be treated like any other gentleman, is rendered liable to exaggerations just the other way. After all, unhappily, there is no

more in this, than has marked our career from the commencement. The American who gets the good word of England is sure of having that of his own country, and he who is abused by England will be certain of being abused at home. I doubt if the history of the United States shows an instance to the contrary, except in cases connected with the party politics of the day; and, much of the time, not even in them.

It is not possible for one living at home fully to comprehend the extent of the malignancy, or the nature of the falsehoods that are industriously circulated here, at the expense of the country and its citizens; and so far from leaning to credulity, when anything of this nature reaches his own side of the Atlantic, not only does his character for sagacity require him to receive it with caution, but even his *safety*. If the craven and dependent feeling which exists so strongly in what

---

are called the better classes of America, on the subject of Great Britain, existed in the body of the nation, our political union, or political independence, in my opinion, would not be worth ten years' purchase.

I went to the lodgings of Sir James Mackintosh, in Clarges Street, where we boldly entered a hackney-coach together, and drove triumphantly up to the very door of ——— House. I was quite passive in this daring act, however ; and I throw the whole responsibility on the shoulders of my learned companion. We found the entrance thronged with footmen, and carriages were constantly arriving.

——— House has one of those ill-contrived entrances, by a flight of exterior steps, which can never be used in bad weather, and which ought never to be used by your sex at all. To obviate this difficulty, there is a more private entrance, through the basement, by which we were admitted. Here

we found, in a sort of semi-subterraneous ante-chamber, ladies uncloaking, amid some fifty lackeys. The room was, in truth, above ground ; but it strongly reminded me of the apartment beneath the rotunda of the Capitol,—that which is called the *caucus*. A footman took our names, and we were announced by a line of servants spread through the passages and on the stairs. I believe there were four repetitions, all in good audible voices.

As the groom of the chambers, who stands at the door of the first reception-room, does not announce until you arrive, this mode at least has the merit of letting you know what is about to be said of you, and it affords an opportunity of correcting mistakes. On reaching this personage, he preceded us through one room to the door of a second, where he announced us in the usual manner. There may be a little more style in this method of sending up

names, but it is not easy to see its use, (unless you admit the one already named,) especially if there be a convenient ante-chamber to uncloak in. Both the ante-chamber and the stairs of — House, used to-night, were unworthy of the rest of the exhibition. The latter, in particular, were almost as narrow and mean as a New York flight.

Lord N——, one of the men of fashion and taste here, told me, in speaking of your sex in England, that he fancied he could see a difference between the women one meets with in and about Grosvenor Square, and the women who frequent — House. He gave a decided preference to the latter. When you remember that Grosvenor Square is inhabited by some of the highest nobles of England, and that it is one of the distinguished quarters of the town, you will at once perceive how subtle are the lines drawn by a fastidious taste;

or, at least, by a fancy that is overshadowed by fashion.

We found some two or three hundred of the *élite* of the town collected on this occasion. The master of the house was not present, and we were received by a sister lady, who excused his absence by telling us he was indisposed. After this ceremony we were permitted to stroll through the rooms and to look about us. I was introduced to a dozen people, among whom were M. Palmella, the Portuguese ambassador, and Sir James Scarlett. The former was a short, compactly-built man, like most of his countrymen; while the latter, whom I had figured to myself, on account of the odious wigs of Westminster Hall, as a staid old gentleman with a greasy face and a red nose, was a handsome, genteel, well-formed, and well-dressed man of fashion. When I mentioned my surprise to —, he humour-

ously remarked: "Yes, yes; he is good-looking, and all that, but he is an impudent dog in the House; most of the lawyers are impudent dogs in the House." It is impudence, you will understand, for a new man to let it be seen he knows more than your hereditary legislator.

I cannot say that I was as much struck with the peculiar advantages of the ladies over the rest of their sex, as was the case with my Lord N ——. There were many pretty, and a few beautiful, women present, but nothing of a very extraordinary nature. The Princess Lieven, who is a mirror of fashion, was among them. She looked more like an American woman, than most of the others.

I was a little amused with two or three whom I knew, and who evidently watched my manner, with the idea of detecting provincial surprise at the splendour and beauty by which I was environed. The



expectation was too obvious to be mistaken. As respects the magnificence, it was certainly a great deal beyond anything we have, and as certainly as much below a great deal I had seen on the Continent. As an American, perhaps, I ought to have been astonished, though certainly not as a traveller.

The house was spacious, without being remarkably so; the furniture and fixtures were comfortable and heavy, rather than tasteful and rich; and the whole entertainment, the mean approach excepted, was as much respectable as magnificent. As for the company, I saw nothing unusual in its appearance. There may have been certain conventional signals and forms that rendered it peculiarly agreeable to those who were in the secret; but, judging it by those general laws that are supposed to regulate the intercourse of the refined and polished, it struck me as being *tant soit peu* below

the tone of one or two *salons* I have entered in Paris. Of course, there was no vulgarity, no noise, and a good deal of ease, and much good sense; but there was a slightly apparent self-felicitation and enjoyment, in a good many, that a little too plainly betrayed a consciousness that they were in —— House.

I was a little annoyed by the curiosity to see how an American would be struck with the wonders, and may have attributed this feeling to some who did not entertain it; but still I should say, that while there was possibly less acting on the score of personal vanity and from individual motives, than there would have been among the same number of French people of rank, there was a good deal more of it from the exultation of belonging to a set so particularly exclusive.

There was present a young Duke of ——, with his wife on his arm; a lady

old enough to be his mother. She was a dark, Spanish-looking woman, well preserved, and with the remains of great beauty. I thought the faces of your sex less English than Common; a circumstance which may have been owing, however, to the *coiffures*, which were generally French. The *toilettes* were rich and handsome, of course; but it is a fact, I think, beyond cavil, that the women of London do not dress so well as their fair rivals on the other side of the Channel; and I can only account for it, by the English lady's-maid wanting the tact and taste of her French competitor; for, half the time, the peculiarity is observable at Paris, even where both parties have access to the same *artistes*.

I went away early, and alone; the latter circumstance occasioning a mistake almost as ludicrous as that which accompanied the well-known Philadelphia experiment in

---

announcing. There is a woman of fashion here, a Countess ——, whose husband's title is the same as his name, which is the same as our own in sound, though not in spelling; the latter having been varied by one of those caprices that have converted St. Maur into Seymour, and, according to Sir William of that Ilk, Pepin into Draper. I gave my name to the groom of the chambers, on leaving the rooms, and, at my request, he called for Mr. ——'s servant; for I had ordered little Smith to be in waiting with a cloak, intending to walk home, the distance being trifling. The first servant on the stairs, however, accustomed to the title of my fair namesake, and aware that she was in the rooms, called out in a loud voice for "Lady ——'s people." This cry preceded me, and when I reached the *caucus*, I found two powdered and liveried lackeys ready to cover me with shawls and cloaks! I declined their

good offices, but begged one of them to call Mr. ——'s man. The little fellow made his appearance, amid the sneers and laughter of his taller peers, who seemed to regard his powdered poll and lack of inches much as the peacocks regarded the finery of the daw.

I went one evening lately to three balls ; a mode of comparing sets that I have always found useful in getting accurate notions of the ways of the world. As a brief account of what I saw may not only amuse you, but serve to give you an idea of how these things are managed here, it shall not be withheld.

The first visit was to a rich merchant, who had risen in the world by his own enterprise, and who had finally come to keep what might be called a pretty good house. The style of building was much the same as that which prevailed in New York among genteel people some thirty years since, with the exception that there

was no stoup. The drawing-rooms were up one flight of steps, that in front occupying the whole width of the building. This is a fashion almost as general here, with the exception of the great houses, as the two rooms and folding-doors at home.

The mistress of this house was nervous, fidgety, and uneasy lest everything should be not quite as elegant as she desired. I had not been in the room five minutes, before she whispered to me her great sorrow that the *Honourable* Mrs. Somebody had not been able to come, on account of some distressing event ; this being positively the first time in my life I had ever heard of the honourable personage. There is a class here, that make almost as much use of this word as the editors who come from New England. The company was exactly what you would suppose it to be when the presence or absence of an *honourable* Mrs. Somebody was a matter of moment.

From this house I went to another, in the

neighbourhood, — for the mercantile people, who aim at fashion, now live altogether at the West-end, — where I found very much the same sort of dwelling, but very different company. The mistress of this house was an American, married to an Englishman of a good estate, and of respectable standing. Here I met with honourables and right honourables enough ; no one appearing to care anything about them. I should absolutely have nothing to say concerning this ball, which was just like any other ball in a respectable house, did I not feel bound to add, that I was much struck with the beauty of the young women, the neatness of their attire, and the accuracy and lady-like manner of their dancing. The quadrilles did not equal those of the Russian embassy at Paris, already mentioned, it is true ; for there was neither the numbers, nor the space, and possibly not the instruction necessary

to produce an exhibition of this nature, equal to what one sees in Paris ; but they were very graceful, and, what may appear to you as heterodox, quite equal in beauty to what one sees in New York or Washington.

I was looking at the dancers, when an English acquaintance observed, that he had lately met with a young American at a ball, and “ really he could not see that she did not dance quite as well as the English girls about her.” You will judge of the effect this produced on me, when I tell you it was said just as I had silently come to the conclusion that the English girls had, at last, learned to dance *nearly*, if not absolutely, as well as our own !

This may serve to give you some notion how accurately nations understand each other’s peculiarities. Since my sojourn in Europe, it has been my good luck to witness the triumph of one American, on a



scene far superior to anything that usually offers in London. I shall not name the place, nor even the country ; but it was at a ball given by a woman of royal birth. The palace was magnificent ; and the company, the first in Europe. There were present fifteen or twenty royal personages, or those who were closely allied to monarchs ; and nearly half in the room were of the titular rank, at least, of princes. I remember there was the heir to an English dukedom among others, and he attracted no more attention than any ordinary young man.

A young American girl was invited to stand up in the set of honour. Her quiet, simple, feminine, lady-like dancing, coupled with the artless ingenuousness of a sweet countenance, in which mind was struggling with natural timidity and the reserve of good breeding, caused her, even in that assembly, to be instantly an object of uni-

versal admiration. As I stood in the crowd, unknown, I overheard the comments, which were general on every side of me. "Who is it?" was the first question; and when some one told her name and country, I heard no exclamation of surprise that an American should be a lady, or know how to dance. In the course of the evening, it is true, twenty compliments were paid me on the grace and deportment of my young countrywomen in general, for it was inferred at once that they had seen a specimen of the nation!

From the house of Mrs. ———, who, herself, is far more creditable to us than many who figure in the periodicals, showing her adopted countrywomen in what the true virtues of your sex consist, by being a model for a wife and mother, while she has cleverness and spirit, I went to that of a Lord C——. Although I

was now under a patrician roof, I saw no sensible difference in the building : even the merchant was as well lodged as the peer, and all three of the houses had precisely the same wearisome 'monotony as our own. After the taste and variety of the dwellings on the continent of Europe, you may imagine how dull and fatiguing it is to enter twenty houses of a morning, and find precisely the same internal arrangement. They appear to me to be constructed like the coffins one sees in our streets, for some particular market ; differing in sizes, to suit, not the persons, but the purses of customers, and, being put one in another, sent away for sale.

The company at Lord C——'s was much the same as that at Mrs. ——'s : it was generally well-bred and well-toned ; and in the principal drawing-room, where the quadrilles were in motion, I saw no difference beyond that which belongs to per-

sonal peculiarity. There were the same pretty faces, the same fine, well-rounded forms, and the same regulated and graceful carriage. Depend on it, the English women will sooner or later dance as well as yourselves. Good luck to free trade !

You will feel some desire to know how balls, like the two last, will compare with balls of our own. In London the rooms are a little larger ; the music is much the same ; the females, to a slight degree, are better dressed as to freshness, though scarcely as well dressed as to taste : the men also, I think, are a little better dressed : the attendance has much more style, and the refreshments are not as good as with us. As to the essential point of deportment, the distinctions are more obvious than one could wish ; especially among the men, and among the very youthful of your own sex.

The young play a very different part in

---

Europe from that which is confided to them at home. On the continent of Europe, though girls of condition are now permitted to mingle a little with the world previously to marriage, it is under severe restraint, and with much reserve : the English have greater latitude allowed them, though infinitely less than is granted with us. They still play a secondary part in society, and are subjected to a good deal of restraint. I should say, that tone, reflection, and perhaps necessity, impart more *retenue* of manner here than it is common to see with us ; though girls of good families, certainly the daughters of good mothers, at home, come pretty nearly up to the level of English deportment. It is the *pêle mêle* of society, in towns that double their population in fifteen years, that is so destructive of manners with us. In the general scramble, no set remains long enough in a prominent situation to form a

model : the growth of the country has this sin to answer for, as well as many others that are imputed to the institutions. In brief, then, a better manner prevailed at these balls than is usually met with at ours,—I say usually, for I know exceptions in America,—but our present concern is with the rule : there was less noise, nothing of the nursery, and generally that superiority of air which is a natural consequence of minds more scrupulously trained and cultivated, and of a breeding subjected to laws more unyielding and arbitrary. Do not whisper these opinions, I beseech you, to any of your acquaintances, lest they murder me.

In making these comparisons, however, I do not wish to be misunderstood. I could fill a drawing-room, even in New York, that Babel of manners, with women who should do credit to any country ; the

difficulty would not be to select, but to exclude.

I have certainly met with a few instances of the exuberant manner among Englishwomen, but never among the higher classes. A caste or two lower in the social scale it is not uncommon; and there is a set in which it actually appears to be the *mode*. Taking one example from this specimen of the nation, I will describe her, in order that you may know not *whom*, but *what*, I mean.

Imagine a pretty woman who will put herself in the centre of the floor alone, *entertaining* two or three men! She talks loud, laughs much, and has altogether a most startling confidence about her: she looks her companion full in the eye, with a determined innocence that makes him feel like a victim, and causes him to wish for a fan. This is a decided garrison manner, and has little or no success at

London. Something like it might be seen in the house to which I first went this evening, but nothing like it at the two others.

It ought to be said, that the young of both sexes have greatly improved of late years in England. The dandies, of whom you read in novels, have positively no existence here, or, if they have, it is not among gentlemen. I have seen a great deal of mannerism of deportment in the secondary classes, often to a disagreeable and ludicrous degree; but nothing at all like the coxcombry that figures in the descriptions of the works of fiction. The men, as a whole, are simple, masculine in manner and mind, and highly cultivated, so far as elegant instruction goes. They fail in the knowledge that is practical; though with a certain set, even with this, or that which relates to things as they are connected with the machinery of their own



power, they are familiar enough. Nearly all have travelled, and most read four or five languages, though few speak any well but their own. The same is true of your sex. I have hardly ever heard the merits of a novel discussed among them, and to the Continental sentimentality they seem to be utter strangers; but it is apparent at a glance, that they understand better things, and have had their minds highly disciplined. Remember, unless in specific cases, I allude always to rules, and not to exceptions.

The Englishwomen are a little apt to strike an American as, in a slight degree, less feminine than his own countrywomen. There is something in the greater robustness of their *physique* to give rise to such a feeling, and I think they are, to a trifling extent, more pronounced in air: while they are much more punctiliously polite, they are scarcely as gracious. There is

certainly less nature about them, though there is more frankness of exterior. All their conduct is rigidly regulated; and while they give you their hands in the manner of friendship, you do not feel as much at home as with the American, who does not even rise to receive you, and who protects the extremities of her fingers as if they were not the prettiest in the world. While the Englishwoman would command the most respect, the American would win most on your feelings in a general intercourse. I believe both to be among the best wives and mothers that the world contains. The English aid nature in all things, while the Americans too often mar it. No women do so much injustice to themselves as the latter; their singularly feminine exterior requiring softness and mildness of voice and deportment,—a tone that their unformed habits have suffered to be supplanted by the rattle of hoydens

and the giggling of the nursery. I have seen many a young American who has reminded me of a nightingale roaring. It is a pity that they do not seek models among the better society of their own country, instead of the inferior sets of Europe.

## LETTER XVII.

TO RICHARD COOPER, ESQ. COOPERSTOWN, N. Y.

The Thames—Its Bridges.—The Boar's Head.—First Visit to London.—My two Cicerones. —An American Sailor at the West-end.—Notions of Liberty.—Rundell and Bridge.—Jewellery.—English Plate.—A Royal Salver.—Anecdote of George IV.

MR. — has carried his kindness so far as to go with me on the Thames. It had been our plan to row to Greenwich; but the weather not proving favourable, we determined to go as far as London Bridge, and return on foot through the City. We took boat, accordingly, at Westminster stairs, and went down with the tide.

The Thames is both a pretty and an

ugly stream. When full, it is a river of respectable depth and of some width ; but, at low water, above London Bridge, it is little more than a rivulet flowing amid banks of slimy mud. The wherries in use are well adapted to their work in this part of the river, but lower down they are not sufficiently protected against the waves. Accidents very frequently happen, though probably they are not out of proportion to the number of boats that are constantly plying in every direction. The principal danger is of getting athwart the cables of barges and ships, when the strength of the current is very apt to cause a wherry to fill.

As we went down with the tide, a pair of sculls answered our purpose, for one can have oars or sculls at pleasure. The banks of the Thames, above Westminster Bridge, are quite pretty ; and above Chelsea, where the river flows through fields, they may be

said to be even more; the villas on the shores, the windings of the current, and the meadows, raising them almost to positive beauty. But below Westminster Bridge, little remains to be admired until you reach the sea. Though on a larger scale, the navigable part of the river has a strong resemblance to the Raritan below Brunswick; being crooked, muddy, and bounded by wet meadows. The latter has a small advantage in scenery, however; the hills lying nearer to the stream. The passage of the Kilns, also, has frequently reminded me of the Thames below London.

Within the town, itself, warehouses blackened by coal-smoke, manufactories, timber-yards, building and graving docks, and watermens' stairs, principally line the shores. There are no magnificent quays, as at Paris, the shipping taking in and discharging by means of lighters; except in the wet docks, of which, however, there

are now nearly sufficient to accommodate all the shipping of the port that is engaged in foreign trade. The Thames presents a very different picture to-day, from what it did when I first entered it, in the year 1806. At that time the river was literally so crowded as to make it a matter of great difficulty to get a ship through the tiers. There were hundreds of galliots alone, engaged in the trade from Holland, and this in a time of vindictive warfare! It was the only place I knew, which gave one a vivid impression of what is meant by a forest of masts. Most of the docks existed, too, at that time, and they were crowded with vessels. I asked the waterman to-day, an old man who remembered the river many years, what he thought might be the visible difference between the number of vessels in the port during the year 1806 and that of 1828, and he told me fully half. My own eye would confirm

this opinion. The trade has gone to the out-ports; particularly to Liverpool. With the commerce of the river, much of its life and peculiarities, it seems to me, have departed. The *costumes* have disappeared: the watermen have a less jolly manner, and even Jack wears the bell-mouthed trousers no longer. These mutations are constantly going on in the world; but the Thames left a vivid impression on my young fancy twenty-two years ago, and returning to it, after so long an absence, they struck me with force, and in some degree painfully.

Although the Thames is not the Seine, nor the Arno, nor the Tiber, it has a picturesque and imposing beauty of its own, especially between the bridges. There is a gloomy grandeur in the affluence of the dark objects, in the massive piles that cut the stream, in the movement, and in the sombre edifices that line the shores. Here



and there a building remarkable in history, or of architectural pretension, is seen ; and usually the dome of St. Paul's is floating in the haze of the back-ground. As for the bridges themselves, they are not unsuited to the general sombre character of the view, though I think them in bad taste as to forms. There is an English massiveness about them that is imposing, but they strike me as being out of proportion heavy for the stream they span, and unnecessarily solid. The arches, with the exception of those of Southwark, are not sufficiently elliptical for lightness and beauty. It would have been a poetical and worthy thought to make the bridge at Westminster gothic. Southwark Bridge is of iron, and the open work impairs the effect of its proportions, which are much the finest of any ; but, could the sides be closed, it would be a succession of bold and noble arches.

Between Westminster-hall and the Cus-

tom-house, there are now five of these heavy piles, viz. Westminster, Waterloo, Blackfriars, Southwark, and London. Preparations are making to rebuild the latter; and as London has improved so much in nothing, of late years, as in its public architecture, it is fair to suppose that the new work will be more worthy of the capital of a great empire than its predecessor: though, I dare say, it will not be as much extolled; since nations, like individuals, as their minds expand, become less vain of their knowledge than they were wont to be of their ignorance. The London Bridge of my nursery tales was but an indifferent specimen of national taste, though lauded to the skies.

We passed the Temple Gardens, and one or two more belonging to private dwellings, before we got to Blackfriars, after which no signs of vegetation were visible. The Temple buildings are quaint and in-

teresting; and the gardens as usual in this country, spots of emerald, beautifully arranged.

We landed at London Bridge, and my companion had the good-nature to point out to me the supposed site of the Boar's Head, in East Cheap.\* It must have been what the cockneys call a *rum* place for an heir-apparent to carouse in; and yet Shakspeare, who wrote in the century after that in which Henry reigned, would scarcely have presumed to take so much liberty with royalty, in an age like his, without being sustained by pretty well authenticated traditions in favour of what he was doing.

Mr. ——— threaded the narrow streets of

\* The recent improvements in this part of the town have caused the house to be pulled down; and it is probable the new avenue, which leads from the new London Bridge to the Royal Exchange, and which, in 1833, promised to make this one of the finest parts of the town, will have obliterated every sign of its site.

this part of the town like one who knew them well, kindly pointing out to me every object of interest that we passed. I smiled as we went along the well-remembered thoroughfares, for it was not possible to avoid comparing the cultivated, celebrated, and refined man who gave himself this trouble, with an individual who had first introduced me, twenty-two years earlier, into the very same streets.

You must be sufficiently acquainted with family events to know that I was once in the navy. At that time, it was considered creditable, as well as advantageous to the young naval aspirant, to show his mettle by going a voyage or two in a merchant vessel as a common mariner, before he was placed on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war. This was my course; and I had twice visited London, in the capacity of a young tar, before I was eighteen, besides making several other voyages.

The first time I came to London, it was fresh from college, a lad of about seventeen. I had then been long enough at sea to get a nautical air, and of course was confounded with my shipmates of the fore-castle. The oldest custom-house officer put on board the ship had been a gentleman's domestic, and he was full of the lore of the servants' hall. He soon singled me out; and I was much edified, for a week, with his second-hand anecdotes of great people, and the marvels of the West-end. The first Sunday after our arrival in dock, he proposed giving me ocular proofs of the truth of his accounts; and we sallied forth in company, he as Minerva, and I as Telemachus.

We passed over much of the ground now passed over under the better guidance of Mr. —, and it was amusing to me to note the difference in the tastes and manner of my two cicerones. When we

approached the Monument, the ex-valet stopped, and with an important manner inquired if I had ever heard of the great fire in London. I had luckily, for it singularly raised me in his estimation. With due formalities, I was then introduced to the place where it had broken out, and to the Monument. "That is what we call the Monument," said Mr. —, in his quiet way, glancing his eye at it, as he turned away to show me the new Boar's Head. "This is the house of my Lord Mayor, and that is the coach of one of the sheriffs," said Mr. Swinburne, for so was the custom-house officer named. "Wren has been much praised and much censured for this edifice," observed Mr. —, as we passed beneath the massive walls. I was led by the ex-valet down a narrow street into a quaint, old, gothic edifice, where, in a large hall, I was confronted with carved monstrosities in wood, which I was told

---

with much chuckling were Gog and Magog. "That is a quaint and rather remarkable building," said the poet, as we passed the head of the same street; "it is Guildhall: you may know that it gets its name from being used by the guilds, or corporated companies of the City." "This is Bow-church, and those are the bells that Whittington heard as he was quitting Lunnun," observed the oracular Mr. Swinburne. "*You* were born far enough from this place to escape the imputation of cockneyism," remarked the poet, as we trudged along. "There, that is St. Paul's!" cried Mr. Swinburne with an awful emphasis, as if he expected me to fall down and worship it. "It was a great work to be executed by a single architect," the poet simply said, "and it has many noble points about it; I think it has, at least, the merit of simplicity." He was right

enough as to externals, but it wants unity of design within.

In this way, then, I went along, with my present companion, irresistibly tempted to compare his quiet, unpretending manner, with the brimful importance and strutting ignorance of the guardian of the revenue. One of the contrasts was so droll that I have not yet forgotten it, though it is unconnected with any of the historical monuments. Mr. Swinburne bristled close up to me, when we had got nearer to the court end, and putting his hand to his mouth, as we passed a quiet old gentleman, he whispered ominously, "An earl!"—"Do you see that person on the opposite side of the street?" said the poet, within fifty yards of the same spot; "it is Lord ——, known as the husband of the handsomest woman in England, and for nothing else." I remember to have



greatly scandalized Mr. Swinburne by one of my antics. "Did you ever hear of such a man as John Horne Tooke," he inquired." — "Certainly; what of him?" — "Why that is he who has just passed,—the fellow who looks like a half-and-half parson." I turned in my tracks incontinently, and gave chase; for, at that early age, I was not insensible to the pleasure of looking at celebrated men, and I had been taught to regard Horne Tooke as a writer who had got the better of Junius. Favoured by the jacket and trousers, I passed several times round "the chase;" and, I believe, at length attracted his attention by my manœuvres. He was an austere-looking man, but I fancied he was not displeased at such evident admiration. As for Mr. Swinburne, he applied some very caustic epithets to my folly, but I succeeded in mollifying him by double doses of admiration for his cockney wonders.

---

Some of the scenes that I had witnessed in my first visits to London, returned to my mind so forcibly to-day, that it appeared as if I had gone back to boyhood and the days of fun. We had in the ship a gigantic fellow from Kennebunk, of the name of Stephen Stimpson. He had been impressed into the British navy, and, when he joined us, had just been discharged from a frigate called the *Boadicea*, or the *Boadishy*, as he termed her, and (quite as a matter of course) he hated England in his heart. This man was particularly desirous of going to the West-end with me at a later day, having heard Mr. Swinburne descant on the wonders to be seen there. As we were walking up St. James's Street in company, whither I had a great deal of trouble to get him, for he was for philosophising and speculating on all he saw, and not a little for fighting, he came suddenly to a halt. An elderly lady was

---

- walking through the crowd followed by a footman, in a mourning livery. The man carried a cane and wore a cocked-hat. Stephen watched this pair some time, and then gravely wished to know why “that *minister* kept so close in the wake of the old woman a-head of him?” I explained to him who they were, but he scouted the idea. It was a regular “minister,” as witness the cocked-hat, the black coat and breeches, and moreover the cane ; and he was not to be bamboozled by any nonsense about servants. I had to let him follow the lady to her own residence, where, as I had foretold, the “minister” took off his hat, opened the door for his mistress, and followed her into the house. It was many months before Stephen ceased to speak of this. After all, the same *promenade* would excite almost as much astonishment in Broadway at this very moment.

At that time there was a stand of sedan-chairs in St. James's Street, near the spot where Crockford's club-house has since been erected. I had some difficulty in getting him over this "shoal," for, after laughing in the chairmen's faces, he was for having a ride on the spot.

The ranger of the Green Park, usually a person of rank, has a very pretty residence and garden that open on Piccadilly. As we passed its gate, on our way to Hyde Park Corner, a black footman was standing at it, his master probably expecting company. The negro was dressed in a rich *white* livery pretty well garnished with silver lace, red plush breeches, white silk stockings, a cocked-hat, and his head was powdered as white as snow. You may imagine the effect such an apparition would be likely to produce on my Kennebunk companion. As there are no houses but this of the ranger on the park side of

Piccadilly, and comparatively few people walk there, we had the black porter, for a little time, all to ourselves. It was with a good deal of persuasion that I prevented Stephen from laying hands on the poor fellow, in order to turn him round and examine him. As it was, he walked round him himself, dealing out his comments with particular freedom. All this time, the negro maintained an air of ludicrous dignity, holding himself as erect as a marine giving a salute, and looking steadily across the street. Among other things, Stephen suggested that the fellow might be one of Mr. Jefferson's "niggers," who had decamped with a pair of his master's nether garments! He was so tickled with this conceit, that I succeeded in dragging him away while he was in the humour. When we returned, an hour or two later, the black had disappeared.

Stephen had a desire to enter the Green

Park, but I hesitated, for I had once been forbidden admission to Kensington Gardens, on account of wearing a roundabout. While we were debating the point, a worthy citizen came up, and said, "Go in, my lads; this is a free country, and you have as much right there as the King." On this intimation we proceeded. "What queer notions these people have of liberty!" observed Stephen, drily. "They think it a great matter to be able to walk in a field; and there they let a nigger stare them in the face, with a cocked-hat, red breeches, silk stockings, laced coat, and powdered wool!" I made my own reflections, too; for the first perception I had of the broad distinction that exists between political *franchises* and political *liberty* dates from that moment. Young as I then was, I knew enough about royal appanages, and the uses of royal parks, to understand that the public entered them

as a favour, and not as a right ; but had it been otherwise, it would have left ground for reflection on the essential difference in principle that exists between a state of things in which the community receive certain privileges as concessions, and that in which power itself is merely a temporary trust, delegated directly and expressly by the body of the people.

But I am permitting the scenes of boyhood to divert me from the present moment.

Mr.——showed me the Blue-coat School, the new General Post Office, and divers other places of interest, among which was Newgate. The architecture of the latter struck me as being unusually appropriate, and some of its emblems as poetically just, whatever may be the legal reputation of the place on other points.

Pursuing our way down Ludgate-hill, my companion turned short into the door

of a considerable shop. It was Rundell and Bridge's, the first jewellers and goldsmiths of the world ! England has probably more plate than all the rest of Europe united ; at least, judging by the eye alone, I think it would so appear to a stranger : although her wealth in the precious stones appears to be even less than that of some of the smaller countries. One certainly sees fewer jewels in society, although I am told the display of diamonds at court is sometimes very great. There are no public collections to compare with those of the Continent; and the severe, one might almost say classical, purity of taste, which prevails in the dress of the men here, must have an effect to lessen the demand for jewels.

I was on the same sofa, at a ball in Paris, with Prince ——, one of the richest men of the Continent. His arm lay on the back of the seat, in a way to bring the hand quite near me. Every finger was



covered with jewels of price, some of them literally having two or three, like the fingers of a woman. A piece of soap would have done more to embellish the hand than all this finery. Directly before me stood the Duke of ——, one of the richest nobles of England. I took an occasion to look at him, as he drew a glove. He had not even the signet-ring, which it is now so very common to wear; but the hand was as white as snow.

The shop of Rundell and Bridge was large; but it made a wholesale and affluent appearance, rather than the brilliant show one meets with in Paris. As Mr. —— was known, we were received with great attention and civility. One of the heads of the establishment took us up stairs into a more private apartment, where we were shown many magnificent things, and among others a good deal of the royal plate which had been sent here to be cleaned. It

struck me, as a whole, that the same objection exists to the taste of England, as respects her plate, that exists in relation to almost all her works of art,—its clumsiness. An English tureen is larger than a French tureen; an English chair, an English plate, an English carriage, even an English razor, are all larger than common. The workmanship is often better, but the forms are neither as classical nor as graceful. As respects the plate, its massiveness may convey an idea of magnificence; but it is a ponderous, and, in so much, a barbarous magnificence, compared to that in which the beauty of the proportions, or of the intellectual part, is made of more importance than the mere metal. To the eye of taste, a vessel of brass may have more value than one of gold.

You can have no just notion of the affluence of the shops of London generally

in the article of plate. Gold, silver-gilt, and silver vessels, are literally piled in their vast windows, from the bottoms to the summits, as if space were the only thing desirable. I have seen single windows, in which, it struck me, the simple metallic wealth was greater in amount than the value of the entire stock of our heaviest silversmiths. I am certain we were shown to-day single sets of diamonds that would form a capital for a large dealer in America.

While I tell you the taste of the English plate is not generally good, the cultivation of the fine arts being still too limited to extend much of its influence to the mechanical industry of the country, there are some great exceptions. Flaxman, one of the first geniuses of our times, —a man perhaps superior to Benvenuto Cellini in the intellectual part of his particular branch of art,—was compelled by

the want of taste in the public, and his own poverty, to make designs for the silversmiths, for which he had been fitted by early and severe study in Italy. Perhaps he was really more successful in his sketches than in his completer works. Had there been a dozen such men in England, the tables of the British nobility would have exhibited taste and beauty, as well as magnificence.

Among the royal plate was a salver just finished, which was beautiful, although the conceit was feudal rather than poetical, and conveyed an idea very different from that created by a sight of the steel-yards and weights, and other familiar objects of domestic use disinterred at Pompeii. The material was gold, and the ornaments were the stars and other insignia of the orders of chivalry, which the present King is entitled to wear. The star and garter of the first English order was in the centre

of the salver, drawn in large figures ; while the others were arranged on the border, which was wide enough to receive them, on a diminished, but still on a suitable scale. The work resembled line engraving, and was done with truth and spirit, though, after all, it was nothing but a sort of *tailorism*. The history of the salver itself was rather curious. The Eastern kings have a practice of enclosing their personal missives in tubes or cases of gold, resembling the tin and copper cases that are used to hold scrolls. In the course of a century, so many of these golden cases had accumulated, that George IV, who is a much greater prince in such matters than in others more essential, took a fancy to have them converted into this piece of furniture.

I heard an anecdote the other day of this sovereign, which shows he can at least bear contradiction, and that on a point

---

on which the nation itself is rather sensitive. The Duke of Wellington made one of his guests at dinner, and the conversation is said to have turned on the different armies of Europe! "I think it must be generally conceded," observed the King, "that the British cavalry is the best in Europe: is it not, Arthur?" for he is said to have the affectation of calling the great man by his Christian name, by way of *illustrating himself*, it is to be supposed. "The French is very good, sir," was the answer of a man who had seen a service very different from that which figures in histories, novels, and gazettes. "I allow that the French cavalry is good, but I say that our own is better."—"The French cavalry is very good, sir."—"I do not deny it; but is not ours better?"—"The French is *very* good, sir."—"Well, I suppose I must knock under, since Arthur will have it so." You are to remember practical

men say the French cavalry is the best of modern times. Had this anecdote come from a *laquais de place*, I should not have mentioned it.

Coming through Fleet-street, Mr. — led me into a court where he had some business with a printer. Here he told me I was in Bolt-court, celebrated as having been that in which Johnson resided: the place seemed now abandoned to printers. Here I left my companion and returned home.

## LETTER XVIII.

TO WILLIAM JAY, ESQUIRE.

Venders of Lies.—Periodical Press.—Influence of Money.  
— The English Press. — Influence of the Aristocracy. —  
Personal Abuse.—Abuse of America.—English Reviews.  
— American Enterprise.—Influence of Mediocrity.—  
Literary Quackery.—Literary Fraud.—Electioneering  
Lies.—Abuses of the Press.—The Press in England and  
America.

I WAS walking to a house where I was engaged to dine, the other evening, when a fellow near me raised one of the most appalling street-cries it was ever the misfortune of human ears to endure. The words were “Eve-ning Cou-ri-er — great news — Duke of Wellington — Evening Courier,” screeched without intermission, in a tremendous cracked voice, and with lungs that defied exhaustion. Such a cry



bursting suddenly on one, had the effect to make him believe that some portentous event had just broke upon an astounded world. I stopped, and was about to follow the fellow, in order to buy a paper, when another cry, in a deep bass voice that harmonized with the first in awful discord, roared from the opposite side of the street, "Contradiction of Evening Courier—more facts — truth developed — contradiction — Evening Courier." In this manner did these raven-throated venders of lies roam the streets, until distance swallowed their yells—worthy agents of the falsehoods and follies of the hour.

This little occurrence has brought to mind the subject of the daily and periodical press, and that of literature in general, in England, and the duty of communicating to you some of the facts that have reached me in relation to all these interests, which may have escaped one residing

at a distance, and who can only know them as they are presented to the world, which is commonly under false appearances.

I presume it is a general rule that the taste, intelligence, principles, tone, and civilization of a nation, will be reflected in its popular publications, which will include the productions of its periodical press of every variety. The only circumstance that will qualify the operation of this law must be sought in the institutions: if these are popular, the rule is pretty absolute; since the press, by being addressed to an average intellect, will be certain to remain on a level with its constituency. Viewed in this light, and compared with the rest of the world rather than with moral and philosophical truths in the abstract, the American press is highly creditable to the American nation, — corrupt, ignorant, and vulgar as so much of it notoriously is. If, however, we look to a higher standard,

and consider the press as a means of instruction, we find less to take pride in. The first of these facts is owing less to the merits of the public at home, than to the misfortunes of masses of men in other countries; and the second, to a system which has created an average opinion that overshadows all ordinary attempts to resist it. The prevailing characteristic of America is mediocrity.

In England, though there are local political constituencies of the lowest scale of reason and knowledge, they exist as servants rather than as masters. The press has no motive to address them, and, of course, it aims at higher objects. But, while the strictly political constituencies of England are scarcely of any account in the action of the government, there is a public opinion that may be termed extra-constitutional, that is of great importance, and which it is necessary to manage with tact and deli-

cacy. This common sentiment acts through various channels, of which a single example will serve to illustrate my meaning.

A rich man on 'Change may not possess a single political right beyond his general franchises as a subject: he has no vote, and, so far as direct representation is concerned, no power in the state.

This is the situation of thousands in England; for while the government is strictly one of money,—seats in parliament being bought as notoriously as commissions in the army,—the system is one which does not give money its power through qualifications, but by a competition in large sums. But while this stock-jobber may have no vote in a government so factitious, so dependent on industry, so much in debt, so willing to borrow, and so sensitive on the subject of pecuniary claims, his *opinion* and good-will become matters of the last moment.

I have selected this instance, because the worst features of the English press are connected with the mystifications, false principles, falsehoods, calumnies, national and personal, and flagrant contradictions that are uttered precisely with a view to conciliate the varying and vacillating interests that depend on the fluctuations and hazards of trade, the public funds, and all those floating concerns of life, which, being by their very nature more liable to vicissitudes than homely industry, most completely demonstrate the truth of the profound aphorism which teaches us that "the love of money is the root of all evil." It is not necessary to come to England to seek examples of the effect of such an influence, for our own city presses exhibit it in a degree that is only qualified by the circumstances of a state of society, which, by being a good deal less complicated, and

less liable to derangement, calls for less watchfulness and editorial ferocity.

As a whole, then, I should say, the predominant characteristic of the English press is dependent on the necessity of addressing itself to the support of interests so factitious, so certain, sooner or later, to give way, and, at the same time, so all-important to the power and prosperity of the nation for the time being. The struggles of parties are subservient to these ends, on which not only party but national power depend. If it has been said truly, that the sun, in its daily course around the earth, is accompanied by the roll of the British morning-drum, it might with equal justice have been added, and followed by the sophisms to which interests so conflicting are the parent.

In guarding these interests all parties unite. In this respect there is no differ-

ence between the Times and the Courier, the Edinburgh and the Quarterly. They may quarrel with each other about the fruits of these national advantages, which they proclaim to be national rights; but they will quarrel with all mankind to secure them to Great Britain. It must be remembered that vituperation and calumny are the natural resource of those who are weak in truth and argument, as stones and clubs are the weapons of children. A shameless, ill-concealed, national cupidity, then, I take to be the predominant quality of the English press. I do not mean that the man of England is a whit more selfish than the man of America or the man of France; but that he lives in a condition of high pecuniary prosperity, (always a condition of peril,) and under circumstances of constant and peculiar jeopardy, that keep the evil passions and evil practices of wealth in incessant excitement.

---

You know the mechanical appearance of the English press already. There is much talent, mingled with much vulgar ignorance, employed in the news departments; the journals, in this particular, appearing to address themselves to a wider range of tastes and information than is usual even with us. Many of our journals, even in the towns, are essentially vulgar in their tone and language, adapting both to the level of a very equivocal scale of tastes and manners; but I do not remember ever to have seen in an American journal of the smallest pretensions to respectability as low and as intrinsically vulgar paragraphs as frequently are seen here in journals of the first reputation. The language of the shop, such as "whole figure," "good article," "chalking up," "shelling out," and other Pearl Street terms, frequently find their way into the leading articles of a New York paper,



whereas those of London are almost always worded in better taste ; but, on the other hand, one daily sees the meanest and lowest cockneyisms, united with infamous grammar, (not faults of hurry and inadvertency, but faults of downright vulgarity,) in the minor communications of the English press. Of this quality are the common expressions of " think of me (my) writing a letter," " he was agreeable (he agreed) to go," " I am recommended (advised) to stay," &c. &c.

It is the fashion to extol the talents of the Times. I have now been an attentive reader of this journal for several years, and I must say its reputation strikes me as being singularly unmerited. That it occasionally contains a pretty strong article is true, for its circulation would secure the casual contributions of able men ; but, as a whole, I rank it much below several other journals in this country, and very much

below some in Paris. It is said this paper reflects the times, and that its name has been given with a view to this character. The simple solution of all this is, I fancy, that the paper is treated as a property, and that it looks to circulation more than to principles, humouring prejudices with a view to popularity. The mere calling of names, and the bold vituperation, for which the Times is notorious, does not require any talent, though nothing is more apt to impose on common understandings. The Morning Chronicle appears to me to possess the most true talent of any journal in London. This appearance, however, may be owing to the fact of its espousing liberal and just principles, for, unlike most of its contemporaries, it has no need of resorting to sophisms and laboured mystifications to maintain a state of things which is false in itself; for it should never be forgotten, in contemplating all the favourite theories of

England, that the argument has been adapted to the fact, and not the fact to the argument.\* I have seen occasional articles from a journal called the Scotsman, that appear to be written with the simple straightforward power of truth and honesty. There is a lucid common sense about this paper which gives it a high place in the scale of the journals of the day. No article that I have ever met with in either of these two papers betrays the cloven foot of the pecuniary interests mentioned, though I cannot take upon myself to say that they are entirely free from the imputation. Still they have always appeared to me to be conducted with too

\* The Examiner, since 1828, has passed into new hands, and, although little accustomed to see the paper itself, the writer was in the constant habit of reading extracts from it in Galignani's Messenger. Taking these as specimens of its merit, he is of opinion, that for vigour, consistency, truth, and distinctness of thought, and for pungent and manly reasoning, this journal stands at the very head of this species of literature.

---

much talent, to lend themselves to a practice that one would think must offend the moral sense of every right-thinking and right-feeling man.

Mr. Canning, not long before his death, openly vaunted the moral influence of England, by way of supporting his political schemes. Nothing is more evident than the fact that the journals of this country frequently admit articles that are intended to produce an effect in other states. I think they over-estimate their influence, however; for I do not believe that the opinion of England has any material power, except in America. As a people, the English are not liked on the continent of Europe; and I think the disposition is rather to cavil at their truths, than to receive their fallacies. The aristocracy of England has a great influence by its wealth, power, and style, on the *desires* of all the other European aris-

tocracies, which very naturally wish themselves to be as well off, but the dogmas of this school would hardly do for the daily journals. I do not say that the English press totally overlooks this class and its interests; on the contrary, it does much to sustain both; but it is by indirect means, and not by argument, or by appeals to the passions. It tells of the liberal acts of individuals of the body, recapitulates the amount of rent that has been remitted to the tenantry, and the number of blankets that has been distributed to the poor. The left hand is studiously made to know what the right hand has done in this way, among the great and noble, while the charities of the more humble are usually permitted to pass in silence. Not satisfied with this, the world is regularly enlightened on the subject of the large entertainments given by the great, the names of the guests, and not unfrequently with the

dresses of the women. The ravenous appetite of the secondary classes to know something of their superiors, is fed daily in this extraordinary manner, (the practice exists no where else, I believe,) and thousands of dreamy bachelors and prim maidens pass their days in the high enjoyment of contemplating at a distance the rare felicities of a state of being to which a nearer approach is denied them, and which a nearer approach would destroy.

I remember, when I came to London in 1826, to have laughed at an account of the manner in which Lord A. and Lady B. and Sir Thomas C. had passed their mornings, with the usual gossip of fashionable life that the article contained, when an American, who had been some time in England, gravely assured me that there were thousands in the nation who would not buy the paper were this momentous stuff omitted. There have been books for

a very long time, which contain the pedigrees, titles, creations, and family alliances of the peers, and which furnish mental aliment for hundreds of devout admirers of aristocracy. These books, which are useful enough in a certain way, when it is remembered that the peers control the first empire of modern times, have been extended to the baronets and knights, and latterly to the gentry of the country. The whole forms a curious study, when one is disposed to ferret out the true principle of the government, and the modes by which families have attained power;\* but they

\* In the reign of Queen Anne, out of a little more than twenty dukes in the empire, six were descended in the direct male line from the natural sons of King Charles II. viz. the Dukes of Richmond, Grafton, Cleveland, Northumberland, St. Albans, and Buccleugh. The dukedoms of Northumberland and Cleveland are extinct, though the titles have been revived in other families; but those of Richmond, St. Albans, Grafton, and Buccleugh, are still enjoyed by the descendants of Charles. George I. did not hesitate to ennoble his mistress, whom he made Duchess of Kendal; and George II. had also his Countess of Yarmouth.

are read with avidity in England, as a means of holding an intercourse with beings who, as respects the mass, form quite another order of creation.

But if the journals, in this manner, contribute to support the aristocracy by feeding these morbid cravings of the excluded, they do more towards overturning it, just now, by their open and rude attacks. I do not say, that I have ever met with an Englishman who is not, in some degree, under the influence of the national

These two women were made peeresses because they were the king's mistresses, but no natural child was ennobled. George III. was still more guarded in his amours; and although he is said to have had several natural children, they were not publicly recognised. The same is true with George IV. though his manner of life was less guarded. The power of the aristocracy had now become so great, that it repudiated such admissions into their ranks. A struggle, however, occurred in 1831, between the different castes of the state, and the King rose in importance. In order to conciliate him, the Whigs immediately gave a peerage to the eldest of his natural children by Mrs. Jordan, and ennobled all the others!



deference for nobility,—for, to be frank with you, I can scarcely recal twenty Americans who are exempt from the same weakness;—but there are a good many who, by drawing manfully on their reason and knowledge, are enabled to detect the fallacies of the system, and who do not scruple to expose them in the public journals. These men, of whom I may have made the acquaintance of a dozen, remind me of the lasting influence which the ghost stories of the nursery produce on the human mind. We drink in these tales eagerly in childhood, and, in after life, though reason and reflection teach us their absurdity, few of us go through a churchyard in a dark night without fancying that its sheeted tenants may rise from their graves. Thus do the boldest of the English, when philosophising the most profoundly on the wrongs and inexpediency of aristocratic rule, look stealthily over

their shoulders as if they saw a lord ! You may judge of the profoundness of the impression here, by its remains in America. Certainly, the mass of the American people care no more for a lord than they care for a wood-chuck ; perhaps, also, the feeling of the real gentry of the country is getting to be very much what it ought to be on such a subject, seeing no more than a man of the upper classes of another country in an English nobleman ; but take the class immediately below those who are accustomed to our highest associations, and there is still a good deal of the sentiment of the tailor in their manner of contemplating an English nobleman. Alas ! it is much easier to declare war, and gain victories in the field, and establish a political independence, than to emancipate the mind. Thrice happy is it for America, that her facts are so potent as to be irresistible ; for, were our fate left

to opinion, I fear we should prove ourselves to be anything but philosophers.

It will not be doing justice to the English press, if we overlook its disposition to indulge in coarse, national, and personal vituperation. The habit of resorting to low, personal abuse, against all who thwart the views of their government, or who have the manliness to promulgate their opinions of the national characteristics, let it be done as honestly, as temperately, or as justly as it may, is too well known to admit of dispute. It may be a natural weakness in man to attempt to ridicule his enemies, but the English calumniate them. They calumniated every distinguished man of our revolution ; no general can gain a victory over them, and escape their vituperation ; and the moral enormities attributed to Napoleon had their origin in the same national propensity.

---

Some of the English with whom I have spoken on this subject, while they have admitted this offensive trait in their press, have ascribed it to the morality of the nation, to whose wounded sensibilities the abuse is addressed! This is very much like imputing uncharitableness to sins, to a Christian conscience. Certainly, I am no vindicator of the personal or political ethics of Napoleon. As respects his morals, I presume they were very much like those of other Frenchmen of his time and opportunities; but if the sensibilities of England were so exaggerated on such subjects, why did they go abroad in quest of examples to scourge? I doubt if there be anything worse in the private career of Napoleon than the intrigue with the "Fair Quaker" in that of George III, or anything approaching that which every well-informed man here tells me is the

present condition of the court of Windsor. Did you ever hear the familiar French song of Malbrook ?

“ Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre.”

etc.

etc.

etc.

Malbrook, you know, was the Duke of Marlborough ; and the song is the French mode of revenging the nation for the manifold floggings it received at his hands. The wisdom of thus killing an enemy in doggerel, whom they could neither slay nor defeat, may be questioned ; but imagine, for a moment, that Wellington and his fortunes had been French, and then fancy the abuse he would have received. I never yet met with a Frenchman who had not a most sincere antipathy to the Duke of Wellington : they tell fierce stories about the Bois de Boulogne, and other similar absurdities, the outbreakings of the mortified pride of a military people ; but I never yet saw or heard a personal calumny

against him in France, unless it was connected directly with his public acts. They say he permitted the terms of the capitulation of Paris to be violated; but they do not enter into his private life to vilify the man.

I have sometimes been afraid this tendency to blackguardism was "Anglo-Saxon," for it manifests itself in our own journals; more particularly among the editors of New England, who, if they have more of the sturdy common sense and masculine propensities of the Father-land than their more southern contemporaries, have also the coarse-mindedness. I have industriously sought the cause of this peculiarity, and at one time I was disposed to attribute it to a low taste in the mass of the nation, which I again ascribed to the effects of the institutions; just as, with us, the strongest term of reproach among the blacks is for one to call his fellow a "nig-

ger;" but observation has convinced me, that this national taste is only secondary, as a cause. The press now caters to it, it is true; but it first created it. I believe, its origin is to be found in the vulgarity inherent in the active management of capricious commercial interests, the factitious state of the national power, and the genuine and unaffected outbursts of a pecuniary cupidity. Look at home, and you will see the presses under the control of those who have the management of floating interests tainted by the same vice. "The love of money is the root of all evil;" and the propensity to blackguard those who thwart the rapacity of the grasping, is one of its most innocent enormities.

I think it very evident that there is much writing in this country that is especially intended for "our market." The English, who control the reviews and journals, are fully aware of the influence they

---

wield over the public mind in America ; and you may be quite certain that a nation, whose very power is the result of combination and method, does not neglect means so obvious to attain its ends. There is scarcely a doubt, that articles, unfavourable to America,—low, blackguard abuse, that was addressed to the least worthy of the national propensities of the English,—were prepared under the direction of the government, and inserted in the Quarterly Review. Mr. Gifford admitted as much as this to an American of my acquaintance, who has distinctly informed me of the fact. I presume the same is true in reference to the daily press. Some fifty paragraphs have met my eye, since I have been here, in which the writers have pretty directly exulted in their power over the American mind. This power is wielded to advance the interests of England, and, as a matter of course, to thwart our own.



It probably exceeds anything of which you have any idea. Whether the English government actually employs writers about our own presses or not, at present, I cannot say ; but it has, unquestionably, agents of this sort on the continent of Europe, and I think it highly probable that it has them in America.

We talk of the predestination of the Turks, but I question if the earth contains a people who so recklessly abandon their dearest and most important interests so completely to chance as ourselves. Both the government and the people appear to me to trust implicitly to Providence for their future safety, abandoning even opinion to the control of their most active enemies, and shamelessly deserting those who would serve them, unless they happen to be linked with the monster party. The chief of a political faction may do almost anything with impunity ; but he who de-

---

fends his country, unconnected with party, is abandoned to the tender mercies of the common enemy. In this respect we are like the countryman in a crowd of pick-pockets,—full of ourselves, but utterly unconscious of our risks.

The young Englishman who aspires to fortune will select his object, and support it or attack it, as the case may be, with his pen. He will endeavour to counteract democracy, to sustain the English Free Trade system, to excite prejudice against America, to arouse antipathy to Russia, to prove France ought not to possess Antwerp, or to uphold some other national interest ; and, if a clever man, he is certain to be cherished by that government and rewarded. Some of the most eminent men England has produced have forced themselves into notice in this manner.

Let us fancy an American to run a similar career. So little is the nation brought

before the European world, that the chances are as one hundred to one, he would attract no notice here ; but we will imagine him in possession of the ear of Europe, and able to bring his matter before its bar. If England were opposed in either her prejudices or interests, he would as a matter of course be vituperated ; for whom did the English press ever spare under such circumstances ? No doubt, a thousand honest and generous pens would be ready to be their countrymen's vindicator ; no doubt the government would throw its broad mantle around its friend, and manifest to the world its sense of its own dignity and interests ? No such thing ; the abuse of the English press would produce even more effect in America than in England ; its tales, however idle or improbable, would be swallowed with avidity, as tales from the capital circulate in the provinces ; and as for the government, it already has

---

a character here for confiding in those who openly repudiate its principles ! Well may it be said, that we have reason to be thankful to God for our blessings, for if God did not take especial care of us, we should be without protection at all.

I have been much struck, here, with the little impression that is made by the reviews. Exceptions certainly exist ; but the critical remarks that, written here, produce no visible effect, would give a work its character with us. Everybody that is at all above the vulgar appears to understand that reviewing "is the great standing mystification of the age."

In making all these comparisons, however, we are too apt to overlook the statistical facts of America. A short digression will explain my meaning. If we speak of the civilisation of England in the abstract, it is not easy to employ exaggerated terms, for it challenges high praise ; but when

we come to compare it to our own, we are to take the whole subject in connexion. Were the entire population of the United States compressed into the single state of New York, we should get something like the proportions between surface and people that exist in England. In reflecting on such a fact, one of the first things that strike the mind is connected with the immense physical results that are dependent on such a circumstance. The mean of the population of New York for the last thirty years has been considerably below a million ; but had it been fourteen millions during the same period, leaving the difference in wealth out of the question, how little would even England have to boast over us ! Losing sight entirely of the primary changes that are dependent on a settlement, and which perhaps seem to be more than they really are, we have actually done as much in the same time

---

as England, in canals, rail-roads, bridges, steam-boats, and all those higher modes of improvement that mark an advanced state of society. These are the things of which we may justly be proud, and they are allied to the great principle on which the future power and glory of the nation are to be based. They are strictly the offspring of the institutions.

We offer our weak side when we lay claim to the refinements, tastes, and elegances of an older, or, in our case, it would be better to say, a more *compact* condition of society. The class to which these exclusively belong is everywhere relatively small. I firmly believe it is larger with us than among the same number of people in any other country, though this opinion is liable to a good deal of qualification. We know little or nothing of music, or painting, or statuary, or any of those arts whose fruits must be studied to

be felt and understood : but in more essential things, we have even sometimes the advantage ; while in others, again, owing to our colonial habits of thought, we have still less reason to be proud.

To apply these facts to our present subject, you will easily understand the manner in which a nation so situated will feel the influence of opinions of an inferior quality. In all communities, men will defer to actual superiority, when it acts steadily and in sufficient force to create a standard. Unluckily, manners, tastes, knowledge, and tone, are all too much diffused in America to make head against the sturdy advances of an overwhelming mediocrity. As a basis of national greatness, this mediocrity commands our respect ; but it is a little premature to set it up as a standard for the imitation of others. It even overshadows, more particularly in the towns, the qualities that might better

be its substitute. Its influence on the whole is genial, for so broad a foundation will, sooner or later, receive an appropriate superstructure ; but, *ad interim*, it places a great deal too much at the disposal of empirics and pretenders. This is the reason (coupled with the deference that the provinces always show to the capital) why reviews and newspaper strictures produce an effect in America, of which they entirely fail in England. Here the highest intellectual classes give reputation ; while in America it is derived from the mediocrity I have mentioned, through the agency, half the time, of as impudent a set of literary quacks as probably a civilized country ever tolerated. There are as flagrant things of the sort perpetrated here as in America, but their influence is limited to the milliners and shopmen. A national *prejudice* may take any shape in England, for no one is exempt from



the feeling, from the king on his throne to the groom in his stable; but, keeping this influence out of sight, the standard of taste and knowledge is too high to be easily imposed on.

Some one has said, with more smartness than truth perhaps, so far as one's own contemporaries are concerned at least, "that no author was ever written down except by himself." Many an author, however, has been temporarily written *up* by others. I have just had a proof of this truth.

A work has lately appeared here, of rather more pretension than common. This book is deemed a failure in the literary circles of London. Of its merits I know nothing, not having read it; but in the fact I cannot be mistaken, for I have heard it spoken of by every literary man of my acquaintance, from Sir Walter Scott down; and but one among them all

has spoken well of it, and he, notoriously a friend of the author, "damned it with faint praise" more than anything else. The bookseller paid too much for the manuscript, however, to put up with a loss, and a concerted and combined effort has been made to write the book up. In England these puffs, which are elaborate and suited to a grave subject, have had no visible effect ; while I see, by the journals at home, that the work in question is deemed established, on this authority !

I am told that the practice of writers reviewing themselves is much more prevalent here than one would be apt to suspect : one can tolerate such a thing as a joke, but it is ticklish ground, and liable to misconstruction. But man loves mystification. The very being who would bristle up and resent a frank, manly vindication of a writer that should appear under his own name, would permit his judgment

to be guided by the same opinions when produced covertly ; nor would the modesty of the author, who glorifies himself in this sneaking manner, be half as much called in question as that of him who, disdaining deceit, met his enemies openly.

There is less of simulated public opinion in the English press than in our own, I presume, owing to the simple fact, that public opinion is neither so overwhelming nor so easily influenced. The constant practice of appealing to the public, in America, has given rise to the vilest frauds of this character, that are of constant occurrence. When it is wished to induce the public to think in a particular way, the first step is to affect that such is already the common sentiment, in the expectation that deference to the general impression will bring about the desired end. I have known frauds of this nature connected with personal malice, which, if exposed,

would draw down the indignation of every honest man in the nation on those who practised them, some of whom now pass for men of fair characters. It is scarcely necessary to say that such fellows are thieves in principle.

There is another all-important point on which, in the spirit of imitation, we have permitted the English press to mislead us. Nothing can be more apparent, in a healthful and natural state of the public mind, than that a lie told to influence an election, or to mislead on a matter of general policy, ought to be just so much the more reprobated than a lie that affects an individual merely, as the concerns of a nation are more engrossing and important than the concerns of a private citizen. In America, an election ought to be, and in the main it is, an expression of the popular will for great national objects ; in England, it is merely a struggle for personal power be-

tween the owners of property. The voter, with us, is one of a body which controls the results; in England, he is one of a body controlled by direct personal influence. No greater ordinary crime against good morals and the public safety can be committed than to mislead the public in matters of facts connected with an election; and yet an "electioneering lie" is almost deemed a venial offence in America, because they are so deemed here, where, as a rule, everything is settled by direct personal influence and bribery.

Some very false notions exist in America on the subject of the liberty of the press. We give it by far too much latitude, perhaps not so much in the law itself as by opinion, and in the construction of the law. The leaning is in favour of publication; firstly, because man is inherently selfish, and he cares little what private wrongs are committed in feeding the mor-

bid appetites of the majority ; and secondly, by confounding a remedy with diet. When power is to be overturned, the press becomes a sure engine, and its abuses may be tolerated in order to secure the inestimable advantages of liberty ; but liberty attained, it should not be forgotten, that while arsenic may cure a disease, taken as daily food it is certain death. Every honest man appears to admit that the press, in America, is fast getting to be intolerable. In escaping from the tyranny of foreign aristocrats, we have created in our bosom a tyranny of a character so unsupportable, that a change of some sort is getting to be indispensable to peace. Truth appears to be no longer expected.

Nor is this all : an evident dishonesty of sentiment pervades the public itself, which is beginning to regard acts of private delinquency with a dangerous indifference, — and acts too that are insepar-

ably connected with the character, security, and a right administration of the state,—political jockeyship being now regarded very much as jockeyship of another order is notoriously esteemed by those who engage in it. In this respect, England has the advantage of us ; for here the arts of politics are exercised with greater *ménagement*, being confined to the few ; whereas, in America, acting on the public, they require public demoralization to be tolerated.

In ferocity and brutality, I think the English press, under high excitement, much worse than our own ; in general tone and manliness, greatly its superior : in both cases the better part of the community is exposed to the rudest assaults from men who belong to the worst. In England, the public is generally spared the impertinence of personal, editorial controversies,—a failing of rusticity ; and the

press is but little used for the purposes of individual malice : while in America, it is a machine, half the time, which, under the pretence of serving the public, in addition to pecuniary profit, is made to serve the ambition, or to gratify the antipathies of the editor, who obtains, through its use, an importance and power he could probably never obtain in any other manner. This distinction is a consequence of presses being stock-property in England, which is not owned by the editors ; while, in America, the man who writes is master of the limited establishment. It is his machine of personal advancement.

There is one point connected with this subject on which we admit a degradation unknown to all other countries. Every community is obliged to submit to the existence of its own impurities ; but we imbibe those which are generated in the most factitious and high-wrought, and,

761.



consequently, the most corrupt state of society in Christendom. This is another of the evils arising from a want of pride and national character,—the people which is thrown into convulsions by the worthless strictures of any foreign traveller on their elegance and tastes, permitting the very putridity of foreign corruption to fester in and pollute its bosom !

LETTER XIX.

TO JAMES STEVENSON, ESQ., ALBANY, N. Y.

My Reception in England.—Rudeness of the English.—  
A female Dandy.—A Discovery.—Eggs.—Democracy  
and Drunkenness.—Conversation with Mr. Brougham.—  
Fashionable Novels.—Children of Rank.—Homage to  
Rank.

ALL this time, the business of eating and drinking goes on. There is, indeed, too much of it for me; the late hours, and the small, heated, and crowded rooms of London, compelling me to decline a good deal more than half the civilities that are offered. One thing has struck me as at least odd. Coming, as I did, into this country without letters, (those sent by

Mr. Spenser excepted,) I had no right to complain, certainly, had I been permitted to go away entirely without a visit : but I have been noticed by more than I had the smallest right to expect ; and yet, among all those who have knocked at my door, I am by no means certain there is a single Tory ! I except the case of Sir Walter Scott, for we were previously acquainted. As we met first in society, the attention was, perhaps, necessary on his part ; though I am far from supposing he would have thought himself bound to cut me because I am an American, although I have some reason for thinking that even he does not view us with very friendly eyes.\* I do

\* Proofs of *naïveté* and ignorance of the world are afforded by most of our travellers, who are the dupes of their own national conceit, and the more exaggerated forms of Europe. As a people, I believe, we are in favour in no part of Europe. I could give much proof on this point, and a good deal will be incidentally introduced into these letters ; but a single anecdote must suffice here. There is one man who is much visited and flattered by Americans

not know the political opinions of Mr. Sotheby, though he is evidently too mild a man to feel strong antipathies on this account ; but, I believe, these two excepted, not only every man who has visited me, or asked me to his house, but nearly every man whom I have met at dinners and breakfasts, has been a Whig ! Is this accident, or is it really the result of feeling ?

now living in England, and divers interesting accounts of his kindness and philanthropy are published by our tourists annually. Within a month, conversing with a countryman just returned from a long visit in Europe, he tells me that an acquaintance of his visited this person while he remained at an inn, where he dined with a near relation of the great man. In the course of conversation, my acquaintance expressed his apprehension that the visit of — would annoy —. “ Not at all,” said the other, who believed his companion to be an Englishman, “ my — rather likes —, for an American.” There are two things that every American should understand. In associating with the English, if he betray the least of the toad-eater, he is despised for the meanness ; this is human nature : if he manifest self-respect, and a determination to have all the rights of a gentleman, he is hated for presuming to be an Englishman’s equal.

I have dined in the last month, among other places, twice at Lansdowne House, and once with Lady ——, who lives in good style here, and keeps a better sort of table, though a widow. Her house was very much like all the second-class houses here, with a dining-room below, and the drawing-rooms on the first floor ; being a little larger than a second-class American town residence !

At table, we had two or three members of the lower house, a Frenchman, and myself. The conversation turned, after the mistress of the house had retired, on the French revolution, which was discussed with all the usual allusions to national character, ferocity, levity, and jacobinism, just as coolly as if a Frenchman did not make one of the company. The poor fellow sat on thorns the whole time, keenly alive to the awkwardness of his situation, and looking hard at me, the only one who

did not join in the discourse, and the only one who appeared to remember his existence.

This indifference to the feelings of others is a dark spot on the national manners of England. The only way to put it down, is to become belligerent yourself, by introducing pauperism, radicalism, Ireland, the Indies, or some other sore point. Like all who make butts of others, they do not manifest the proper forbearance when the tables are turned. Of this, I have had abundance of proof in my own experience. Sometimes these remarks are absolutely rude, and personally offensive, as a disregard of one's national character is a disrespect to his principles ; but as personal quarrels, on such grounds, are to be avoided, I have uniformly retorted in kind, if there was the smallest opening for such retaliation. Sometimes the remarks are the result of kind feelings, and a misappre-

hension of facts, when I have always endeavoured to set the matter right. All foreigners complain of the English in this respect; though, so far as my little experience goes, I think, in general, the very highest classes do not merit the opprobrium they receive on this account, although extraordinary things of the sort are told of even them. Down as low in the social scale as the third or fourth sets, the commercial classes in particular, the failing amounts almost to intolerance.

We,—that is to say, the men,—were still at Lady——’s table, when the raps at the front door announced evening company. It is necessary to understand the eloquence of a London knocker, to appreciate the melody that followed. Two or three messages were sent to the guest most at home, to summon us to the drawing-room, but the French revolution was in the way. At length, we got rid of the bloody tragedy:

and, mounting to the first floor, found a room already full of company.

I had the honour of being introduced to Lady ——, who came nearer to a dandy in petticoats in her manner than any woman I ever met with. I can only liken her apparent affectations of speech to those one sometimes hears on the stage; a lisping, drawling superciliousness, that may be understood, but cannot be described. She is the only instance I have yet met with, of an Englishwoman of rank who had not an unpretending, simple manner of utterance; for most of them speak the language, not only well, but with a quiet dignity that is very agreeable. Indeed, I should say, the women of this country, as a rule, speak with great precision and beauty, though they often appear cold and repulsive.

A countrywoman of ours, at ——, was always talking of this Lady ——. Of



course I supposed they were intimate, the official characters of their husbands bringing them necessarily much together. I alluded, therefore, to Mrs. —— as one of her acquaintances. “——” “——,” she repeated, with that exquisite lisp of hers, “I do not think I know them.” I wish I could impart to paper the consummate affectation of her manner as she said this, for it was quite as admirable in its way as the coolness with which she denied an acquaintance that I was certain, in the nature of things, she could not readily have forgotten. I was soon tired of this, and stole away at the first opportunity.

There was at table to-day Mr. ——, the ————. He is a distinguished commoner, a member of parliament, and a rich landholder. I was surprised to find this person speaking very much in the worst *drawing-room* manner of our New England dialect. I do not mean that he

said "dooze," and "ben," and "nawthin," for his pronunciation was not amiss; but he had the mean intonation, and sing-song utterance, that we so well understand in America. I should have pronounced him one of us, in a minute, had I not known who he was. This is the second instance of the kind I have met with here. *Au reste*, he was a benevolent, sensible, modest man, and, as I thought, without prejudice against America. I love such Englishmen.

I have breakfasted, lately, with Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Sharp, Mr. ———, and two or three others. At the house of the first I met Mr. Wynn, a prominent Whig; and at the latter's we were, the host, Lord S——, Sir ———, and myself. Mr. Rogers was also present on most of these occasions. At Mr. Sharp's were Lord ———, a young Tory, for a novelty; and Lord ———, a lad, who is the

heir of Lord L——. I had seen the former in Paris.

You will be amused with one of my discoveries. I was offered an egg, with the recommendation that it was “a country-laid egg.” I had thought myself, until that moment, deeply versed in the mystery of cooking and eating eggs, whether *à la coq*, or in *omelettes*. Never before had I heard that an egg laid in the country was better than one laid in a town! I was once told (it was when a boy), that the fashion in cooking eggs, like everything else, was running from one extreme to the other, provincial ignorance having been suddenly enlightened; and, from boiling them as hard as bullets, we had exaggerated the new mode by barely warming them through. An egg should be cooked, *à la coq*, just enough to allow the centre of the yoke to run while warm, and to become hard when cold. It should

always be eaten from the shell, both because it is better taken in that way, and because it is not gentlemanly to be making messes, and more especially unsightly messes, at table. The wine-glass or egg-glass is an abomination, and altogether a most vulgar substitute for the egg-cup, and one quite unfit to be seen anywhere but in a steam-boat or a tavern frequented by *gulpers*. All men accustomed to polite life will agree to this; but how many know the difference between a "town-laid" and a "country-laid egg?" You see by these little incidents how far a new country may be from an advanced state of civilization, notwithstanding it possesses gallowses.

The conversation at Mr. L——'s, whom I had known in America, turned on the begging mission of Bishop Chase of Ohio. One of the gentlemen gave an account of this prelate's church statistics that startled

me a little. The population of the state was set down at pretty near a million, and the clergy at less than a dozen! I ventured to say that this must be a mistake, unless clergymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church were exclusively meant. There is always a period in the first settlement of a region where there is a deficiency in the spiritual ministrations; but the accounts should not go forth unaccompanied by the explanations, for they tend to mislead. The statements relative to drunkenness, got up for effect by the Temperance Societies at home, are giving us an undeserved reputation for that vice, of which I feel convinced we have, relatively, *among the native population*, as little as any other nation I have visited, and much less than most of them.

I feel persuaded there is a party in America that wishes to see these misstatements propagated, in order to bring free institu-

tions into disrepute—a party that embraces a large portion of the trading foreigners ; and verily they achieve their object, for democracy and drunkenness are closely associated in the minds of millions of the well-intentioned in this hemisphere. If free principles do prevail, it will be under the providence of God, and through their own energies ; for those who spout loudest in their praise at home, and even carry out their doctrines to untenable extremes, take the least heed of anything that does not immediately affect their own personal interests ; and as for the government, it actually throws its weight into the hostile scale on this side of the Atlantic, opposing its own friends and rewarding its enemies.

This is a singular state of things ; but such is the result not only of my own observations, but of those of various intelligent countrymen of ours, who have seen much

more of Europe than myself. Were I an office-seeker, I would at once resort to the meannesses that obtain for an American the outward favours of the aristocracies of Europe, whatever may be their secret opinions, as the most certain method of being deemed worthy of the confidence of the government at Washington, and of obtaining a reputation in the circles at home.

I have lately had an extraordinary proof of what I now tell you. At one of the dinners at Lansdowne House, Mr. Brougham was present. He came late, and took his seat at the table opposite to the end at which I sat. Of course we had no conversation during dinner. As we were retiring to the drawing-room, Lord Lansdowne did me the favour to present me to this distinguished man. The introduction took place at the dining-room door, and we walked across an antechamber together,

when the usual compliments and civilities passed. We had no sooner reached the ladies and made our bows, than Mr. Brougham turned to me, and abruptly demanded—"What is the reason so many of your people desert the distinctive principles of your government when they come to Europe?"

I have been thus particular in relating the circumstances under which this extraordinary question was put, for I think they prove what was uppermost in the mind of Mr. Brougham, and the strong impression that had been left by the circumstance to which he alluded. It is quite evident that this impression must have been unfavourable either to the institutions, or to the candour of the national character.

I hoped the fact was not so. "My experience would say it is," was the answer. "To what class of men do you allude



in particular, Mr. Brougham?"—"To your foreign ministers, especially," he said. I thought this very extraordinary, and said as much; and, as something might depend on the character of the individual, I begged him to name one of those who left this impression behind him. He did, mentioning, without reserve, a distinguished minister of the republic, who is now dead. To all this I could only say, that I supposed a mistaken desire to make themselves agreeable must have been at the bottom of such a course; and here the conversation dropped, by mutual consent.

I do not know whether this conversation will strike you as it struck me, for I confess it would seem that we have some "country-laid ministers," or our ministers have felt confident of having had very "country-laid" constituents.

Mr. Brougham was desirous of knowing how we contrive to print books so

cheaply as he had understood we did, labour being so dear. He had been told that Scott's novels were sold for a dollar a copy. The secret of this fact is to be found in the meanness of execution, the extent and the rapidity of the demand, and most of all, in the circumstance that the author is paid nothing. A reprint, moreover, is not made from a manuscript, and has no alterations, and few corrections. In addition to all this, the press corrections of books is immeasurably more accurate and laboured in England than in America. Men of education are employed here as proof-readers, and, perhaps, most of the popular authors of England have very little knowledge of the grammar of their own language. All these people must be paid, and the money is charged against the work.

A novel of no great merit will bring its author four or five hundred pounds in

England, especially if it be at all supposed to bring the reader in contact with the feelings and sentiments of the "nobility and gentry." So profound is the deference of those who live in shadow, for those who are beneath the sun's rays, in this country, that the price of a lord's pen is considerably higher than that of a commoner's! I dare say it will be a new idea to you, to measure literary merit by a pedigree, but it is a mode much practised here. A lady of condition lately offered a novel to a fashionable publisher, and the answer was, "Two hundred if anonymous, and five hundred with the name of the author;" the latter, you will understand, having no other value than that of rank,—the book being a first effort. An application was made to me to contribute to an annual, and, by way of inducement, I was shown a list of those who had engaged to write for it, among whom were six or eight

lords. Curious to know how far these people submitted to vulgar considerations, I put the question; and was given to understand, that they were not only paid as writers, but paid as lords. The moon may not be made of green cheese; but rely on it, could we get near enough to discover its substance, it would turn out essentially different from anything we imagine.

There was a boy, the heir of a very high title, at one of my late breakfasts: he went away the first, to go to school I fancy; and the master of the house made the mistake of leaving us while he went to the antechamber to see the lad off. When he returned, he came up to me with a momentous manner, and muttered, "Three earldoms in the family!" I was compelled to compare this with the total absence of fuss about boys and girls of rank on the continent of Europe. Just before we left Paris, at a child's ball, a little girl who

was selected to dance with one of the princes, was told by her mother to say "monseigneur," in speaking to her partner. After they had got a little warmed with the exercise, the pretty little thing turned round to the boy and said, "Why am I to call you *monseigneur* :— are you a bishop?"—" *Je n'en sais rien, moi,*" was the answer. There is young — ; he is the heir of vast estates, of palaces without number, and of a collection of pictures and statuary alone that would constitute a large fortune. There are five or six principalities in the family, and when he is married he is to take one of these titles, until he succeeds to the ancient and historical distinctive appellation of his race; but at present no one calls him by anything but his Christian name, although nearly a man!

It appears to me that the nobles of this country themselves make very little parade

of their claims, but that the fuss comes principally from those who deem it an honour to be their associates. Nothing more deranges the philosophy of one of the true devotees of rank here, than to find that others do not worship the idol with the same zeal as himself.

## LETTER XX.

TO RICHARD COOPER, ESQ. COOPERSTOWN.

Tower of London.—Old Implements of War in the Armoury.—English Rudeness and French Politeness.—Order of Precedence.—American Pronunciation.—National Peculiarity.—Right of Impressment.—Effect of a Hint.—Anecdote.

PERHAPS I ought not to confess the weakness, but we have actually been to see the Tower. Luckily the “lions” have been sold, so we escaped the most vulgar part of the exhibition.

The Tower proper is a square building, with four turrets, or rather towers, at the angles, and is by no means large, though it is said to be as ancient as the Conquest: the Romans are thought to have had a

fortress at, or near, its site. In addition to this building, however, there is a little dingy town around it, principally built of bricks, and surrounded by a ditch and walls. The latter have regular bastions, and the former is wide, deep, and wet, feeling the influence of the tides of the river, for the whole stand immediately on its banks.

This place has been so often described, that I shall say little beyond our general impressions. It struck us as much less imposing than Vincennes, though venerable by time and associations. The Tower itself will not compare with the donjon of Vincennes, its French counterpart; and the adjuncts are equally below those of the Tower of Paris.

The collection of armour disappointed us greatly, being altogether less interesting than the fine specimens of the *Musée de l'Artillerie*, near the church of St. Thomas d'Aquin; a museum of whose exist-



ence nine Frenchmen in ten seem to be profoundly ignorant, while it is one of the most curious things in Europe. Unfortunately, some musty antiquary has lately robbed the armour of the Tower of all claims to be considered genuine, or as appertaining to the persons of the great men on whose effigies it is displayed, and therein he has annihilated most of its interest. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." I wish with all my heart the man had not been half so learned, for, like a novel by Scott, or a play by Shakspeare, in this case the fiction was probably more interesting than the reality. We ought not to quarrel with truth however, since there is little danger of our getting too much of it.

Of course, we looked at the regalia ; but with little interest, for it is not handsome, and I suspect most of the stones are false. The precaution is used of showing it by

the light of a lamp. A crown, notwithstanding, is a famous sight for the English multitude. I would rather take, at random, one of the cases of precious articles in the Louvre, or at the *Jardin des Plantes*, than the imperial crown of Great Britain. What between the Stuarts and some of the later princes, your *bond fide* jewels must have been made of steel to withstand their rapacity. Depend on it, had the crown been worth anything, James II. would have looked to it, although he ran away from his kingdom.

There are some curious old implements of war here; but by no means as many, or as rare, as in the collection at Paris. They showed us the axe with which Anna Boleyn was beheaded, and, sure enough, it was a weapon to make quick work of a "little neck." I was most struck with a sword or two that I could not hold at arm's length, and which would really seem to

demonstrate that, as our minds expand, our bodies shrink. Will the day ever come when matter shall disappear altogether, to give place to the ethereal essence of the spirit? The sight of these swords, and of that of some of the armour, is the first position proved in demonstrating the existence of giants,— and where are they to-day?

I went to dine with —— ——, on our return. This gentleman had been civil enough to send me two or three invitations, and I now went a little out of my way to manifest a sense of his persevering politeness. I was the first there; but a large party came pouring in immediately after, not a soul of whom had I ever seen before. The old Earl of ——, the Earl of ——, the son of the chief of the Irish volunteers, and his wife, Lord ——, Sir —— ——, and many others, were announced in quick succession. Finding it awkward to stand in a crowd, with no one

to speak to, I looked at the pictures, of which the house was full. While engaged in this way, a young man came up and spoke to me. It was civil in him, for it appeared to me that he saw I was a stranger,—the only stranger in the party,—and wished to be polite accordingly. We conversed a few minutes at a window that was a little removed from the rest of the company.

They have become punctual at London, and I do not think it was fifteen minutes from the time I entered before dinner was announced. Each of the men took a lady (for there happened to be pretty nearly a tie), and disappeared, leaving my companion and myself standing where we were, by the window. He seemed uneasy, and I thought the movement a rare specimen of extreme delicacy of deportment. The only stranger, and he old enough to be the father of some of the young men

•

who had dashed a-head of him, was left standing in the drawing-room, as if he were a part of the furniture! I looked hard at my companion, to see if he had the family physiognomy, but he had not; and then I ventured to observe, "that if we were to dine with the rest of them, it might not be amiss to follow."

As we are endeavouring to trace national manners, I will relate an anecdote that occurred just before I left Paris. Madame de —— invited G—— to a great dinner, where he was the only stranger, with the exception of an unexpected guest: that person happened to be Count Capo d'Istrias, the president elect of Greece. Just before dinner was announced, G—— removed to a little distance from the lady of the house, for his invitation had been so worded as to give him reason to think that the entertainment was a compliment to himself, and he could not for an instant dream of

preferring claims in competition with M. Capo d'Istrias. Madame de — took the arm of the president elect, and, walking towards him, she did him the favour to present him to Mad. de Talleyrand, who was of the party, and whom he had the honour of leading to the dinner-table. These are trifles, but they are just the trifles that mark the difference between the social tact of London and that of Paris.

I could not divest myself of the idea, that, had I been anything but an American, this cutting neglect would not have occurred ; and when I found that precisely the lowest seat at the table was left for me, I endeavoured to recall that passage in Holy Writ, where one is directed to take the lowest place at a feast, as a course good for the soul. Although we have no established religion in America, I will be bold enough to say, that no one else, that day, bethought him of this text.

My companion, after all, proved to be a connexion of the family, for the seat at the foot of the table had been left for him. The master of the house sat at the other end, and the mistress in the centre, according to the French mode; so you will perceive I was literally *in extremis*, at this banquet. So much care having been taken of myself, I felt curious to see in what manner the others had been provided for. A swarthy, dark-haired, common-looking young man sat on the right of the mistress of the house, while old Lord ——, who was a full general in the army, occupied a more humble situation. This young man was also a soldier, for I heard him talking of a campaign he had made; but, by his years, he could not have been more than a colonel at most, if as high in the army. Of course he must have been of a political or social rank higher than either of the two earls; and this, in England, would give

him precedence of his own father ! I believe he was the Duke of ——.

A handsome, well-mannered young man sat on my left. Indeed, our end of the table was pretty much occupied by the boys, and I began to apprehend a roasting on account of a few grey hairs that time is scattering around my temples. They were well-behaved lads, however ; I suppose, on account of their being in Parliament, as I found, by the conversation, was the case with the whole of them. They had all been rowing on the Thames that morning ; and, as I had urged the oar myself in my time, we had at least something to talk about.

The black-haired dignitary gave an account of the death of some officer whom he had seen shot in battle. He had himself found the body, after the affair ; and, he added, “ it had been stripped by the French soldiers.”—“ Why not by our own ? ”



put in my young neighbour, rather pithily. "Because I do not think any of ours had been near it," was the answer; but it sounded like an *arrière pensée*.

It appeared well on the part of my neighbour to suggest the doubt, and I fell into discourse with him. He had discovered that I was an American by a remark of my right-hand companion, who knew the fact, and he soon began to speak of the difference in language between the English and Americans. He told me he had just come from Paris, and that, while strolling in the Palais Royal, he had been struck with the pronunciation of three men, who were walking before him. Their dialect was provincial, and he had been at a loss to discover from what part of England they had come, when he ascertained, by their discourse, they were Americans. I told him we had social *castes* in America, as in England, though they were less

strongly marked than common ; and that men, of course, betrayed their associations in nothing sooner than in their modes of speech. He admitted the justice of this distinction ; but I question if he had ever before thought of America, except as a jumble of a whole people in one *omnium gatherum*. He made a remark that I felt to be just, and one could wish it might be made in the ears of all those who concoct the President's and governors' messages, of the critics, and of the writers of the whole nation. He said he was struck with the manner in which we used the word "our." We did not say "America," but "*our* country," "*our* people," "*our* laws," "*our* this," "*our* that," "*our* t'other." I had been disagreeably impressed, myself, with the same peculiarity, for it is clearly bad, since "*the* country," "*the* laws," "*the* institutions," could mean no other than those of the country in discussion, and would

be in better taste. I did not admit this however, for I had been put at the foot of the table on account of that country, and one never receives scurvy treatment, even for a defect or a misfortune that cannot be helped, that he does not begin to defend it. I told my young critic that it was all for want of a name, the term "United States" being too long; and that the institutions favoured the notion of a right of property in everything national. He acquiesced in the reasons, which no doubt are the true ones, but he did not appear the more to admire the taste; an opinion that, between ourselves, he entertains in common with some others.

This young man amused me with the entire coolness with which he complimented me on my English being as good as usual. These people are so accustomed to think of us as inferiors, that the bad taste of telling a man in society, "Really, now, I

do not see but you know how to speak, or to use a fork, or to drink your wine, or to go through the manual of polite life, quite as well as one of us," never appears to strike them. One gets a good many of these oblique compliments, here. My young neighbour was modest and sensible, but he made this obvious blunder.

My brother statue began to speak of America, and his right-hand neighbours listened a little too superciliously for men who had so unceremoniously exalted themselves ; and I longed for an opportunity to let them understand whereabouts America lay, and the sort of stuff of which she was made. Chance favoured me, for my neighbour happened to express his apprehensions that the difficulties of Europe might bring about a war, to which America would become a party.

" I trembled," he said, " the other day, when the Navarino affair took place, for a

war would compel us to impress ; and then America *might* think fit to resent it."

I told him that impressment, continued a week, out of American vessels, would undeniably produce a war.

" Why cannot the two governments amicably settle the matter, by admitting a mutual search in each other's ships ?"

" Such a privilege would be nominal as respects us, as we could not profit by it ; the institutions would forbid impressment."

" It is a thousand pities the question cannot be settled."

" We hold it to be settled, already, by the law of nations and common sense. The right to impress is not an international but a municipal right, and, of course, can be exercised legally only within the jurisdiction of the nation using it. England has no more claim to follow her seamen into our territory, than to follow her criminals. If we were to send con-

stables to London to arrest thieves, or on board ships on the high seas, we should soon hear of it. Jurisdictions cannot conflict in this manner, or there is an end of the immunities of national character."

"What is then to be done?"

"You ask us to concede a favour, and a high favour, that of subjecting the citizen to impositions and trouble for your sole benefit. Now, I think a scheme can be suggested by which the matter may be disposed of."

By this time, every ear was pricked up and attentive: I proceeded—"As for permitting English officers to be the judges of the matter, it is out of the question. We never can concede, and never ought to concede that point. But give us a *quid pro quo*, and we may be induced to pass laws that shall purge our shipping, as near as may be, of your seamen."

"What could we offer?"

“ There is the island of Bermuda ; you hold it, solely, as a hostile port to be used against us ; I think, for the peaceable possession of that island, our government would make some sacrifice ; and”—here I paused a moment, between a reluctance to hurt my brother statue’s *amour propre*, and the recollection of my own attitude on the pedestal, the latter prevailing,—“ and, by way of inducement to make the arrangement, you ought to remember that twenty years hence England will not be able to hold it.”\*

The dose worked particularly well. Head

\* It is not yet ten years since this opinion was given. Were the money that the United States this year distributes among the several states, as returned revenue, (near 8,000,000 sterling,) appropriated to a navy, it would *build* and keep at sea for a twelvemonth fifty sail of the line. It is “ too bad ” that a nation, with such means, should be so much under the dominion of a false feeling, as to allow another people to occupy an island like Bermuda, at its threshold, with no other view than to its own annoyance. The internal legislation of this country is practically among the best in the world, while its foreign interests seem to be conducted pretty much on the Mahometan doctrine of fatalism.

went to head, until the idea passed up the table, quite beyond the salt. I heard Lord E—— exclaim “It is too bad!” I did not think it half as bad, however, as putting a foot on the neck of a stranger; and, moreover, it was true.

The effect of the hint was quickly apparent, for we were no sooner in the drawing-room, than I was approached by half a dozen lords, and I dare say, if the dinner were to be gone over again, the bearings and distance from the salt would have been materially altered. I shook the dust off my feet in quitting that house.

I believe I have not told you an adventure at another house. This was at a dinner given by a merchant; a man of the City, but who does not live in the City, for the *cits* are now fairly rooted in the West-end. When dinner was announced, the master of the house formally bowed to me, and mentioned my name. This is an in-





3 9015 06586 3212

GL...

**DO NOT REMOVE  
OR  
MUTATE**